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EDITORIAL

## DEPLOYMENT COUNTDOWN

The Defense Department likes to boast that its cruise missiles are so accurate that one of them launched in the morning from a moving truck in the east of England could land on a dining room table in the Kremlin by lunchtime. Faced with the prospect of such an unappetizing dish, Yuri Andropov is understandably eager to close the Kremlin's window of vulnerability to Western weapons. His offer last week to cut the number of Soviet nuclear warheads in Europe to a point of parity with the West's—in exchange for an American agreement to keep its cruises and Pershing 2s off the Continent—will not halt the arms race, but it might insure that the silvery object on the Soviet lunch platter is a sturgeon.

Andropov conceded that parity should be based on the number of deliverable nuclear packages—not the number of missiles. That seems eminently realistic; it's warheads that can really spoil a day. But he also asked that all Western warheads be included in the deal, whether they be French, British or American, or start out on land or in the air. In its first reaction, the Reagan Administration repeated its insistence that the French and British weapons—as well as certain bomber-borne missiles—be excluded.

But fair is fair. Neither the dialect nor the provenance of a warhead matters much at the point of delivery. The British bombs are, in effect, under NATO (i.e., American) control. And the mystique of French nuclear "independence" is held only by the French. In the still-classified 1982 U.S. Defense Guidance Plan, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger based his strategic planning on the assumption that the French would join a European war "on the third day."

Andropov's initiative is canny. It puts Reagan on the spot for a response in kind. And there's not much time; the new U.S. missiles are due in Europe this year. It's almost time for launch.

**THATCHERISM HANGS TOUGH**
Christopher Hitchens

**KIDS AS CONSUMERS, COMMODITIES**
Barbara Ehrenreich
David Nasaw

**KIDS AND POLLUTION**
Tracy Freedman
David Weir

**GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ**
Ronald De Feo

**O.E.D., O-SCZ**
Gary Giddins

MARIN COUNTY LEGACY, OR

## THE CURSE OF THE BUCK BUCKS

PEG BRICKLEY AND FRED POWLEDGE

When Beryl Buck made out her will she had no way of knowing that the $7 million worth of stock she was bequeathing to the people of her beloved Marin County, California, would one day be worth $300 million. But that is what happened when Shell Oil bought the small Belridge Oil Company in 1979, four years after Buck died. Like the money in Mark Twain's story "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg," the legacy has brought unsettling changes to the people and institutions of Marin County, and the power and influence of private philanthropy have been exposed to rare public scrutiny.

There is little evidence that Buck's millions have brought any great improvements to the lives of those who have been caught in the unexpected shower of money. Indeed, to the people of Marin County, the blessing has become something of a curse. Furthermore, their experience, if it is in any way representative, shows that the performance of private philanthropy is at best mediocre, and at worst harmful.

Buck's nest egg, which is held by the San Francisco Foundation in a perpetual trust, produces income of about $25 million a year. Such a legacy would raise eyebrows anywhere, but a lot of people in the Bay area think Marin County is an unlikely charity case.

The county, which is situated on a hilly peninsula rising from the waters of the Pacific Ocean and the San Francisco Bay, has the sixth highest per capita income in the nation. Ninety-three percent of its 230,000 residents are white, compared with 72 percent in the greater Bay area.

(*Continued on Page 606*)

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# LETTERS.

## POETIC JUSTICE IN NICARAGUA?

*Washington*

I was surprised on reading the letter from The Committee to Support Nicaraguan Culture ["Letters," *The Nation*, April 23] to learn that such a collection of progressive intellectuals could find the suppression of fundamental human rights to be overshadowed by the proliferation of poetry workshops. Will they next form The Committee to Support Argentine (or Haitian, etc.) Culture because, say, opera is taught in the schools?

American intervention in Central America is wrong because it underwrites murder and the destruction of individual liberties of Third World peoples. But murder and the destruction of individual liberties remain the same whether perpetrated by authoritarians on the right or on the left; it certainly makes no difference to the victims.

*Doug Bandow*
*Editor,* Inquiry

## TRASHING A COMPETITOR

*Paris*

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is at liberty, I suppose, to trash and to trivialize Catherine Clinton's well-researched monograph, *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South* ["Rich White Southern Women . . .," *The Nation*, March 26]. All's fair in love and war, and especially in academic book reviewing. But readers should realize that this reviewer indiscriminately wields a machete in dismissing the work—especially the fine archival work—of a younger historian, a "competitor."

And what are we to make of Fox-Genovese's rehabilitation of Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman's *Time on the Cross*? Readers are told that Clinton mistakenly criticizes that book "for ignoring women." "Fogel and Engerman," Fox-Genovese reports, ". . . have a better record of paying attention to black women than most Southern historians, male or female." Fox-Genovese should know better. Almost without exception, every assertion in *Time on the Cross* about slave women (not "black women") is mistaken. Historians know that. Why has such knowledge escaped the attention of Fox-Genovese? What has she been reading for the past nine years?

*Herbert G. Gutman*

## CLASS CONFLICT AND THE GHETTO

*Ann Arbor, Mich.*

Daniel Lazare's "Antifascists in the Ghetto" [*The Nation*, April 30] was an unfortunate display of one-dimensional Marxist reductionism. Lazare would have us believe that class conflict was the central motif of the Jewish rebellion. I contend that genocide directed at Jews, irrespective of class, was the primary motive for the rebellion and other forms of resistance. There were class divisions inside the ghetto, but the most important boundary was the wall that segregated Jews from Christians. Even a dogmatist like Lazare should be able to appreciate that bourgeois and working-class Jews shared an objective interest—staying alive!

Lazare is correct in asserting that revisionist Zionists served on the Nazi-appointed Jewish councils and police forces. However, according to Isaiah Trunk, an author he quotes, these functionaries were selected from all organized Jewish sectors except the Communists, and some of them served as double agents, providing covert assistance to the resistance. Emmanuel Ringelblum, the other author he quotes, also repeatedly spoke of the ways in which some of the functionaries served as double agents. Without that help it is not clear whether either Zionist or Communist organizations could have existed long enough to stage a rebellion.

Communists, socialists and Zionists (both left- and right-wing) were the major actors in the resistance because only they had organized cells or paramilitary units before the Nazi occupation. This was a necessity for the maintenance of secrecy. Attempts to form new groups during the occupation were repeatedly foiled by informants.

The formation of a joint command did not result from the coalescence of the entire Jewish community around left leadership and ideology. Both left and right elements merged when a full uprising seemed feasible and unpostponable. This can be seen quite clearly in the founding charter of the Jewish Fighting Organization (dated December 2, 1942):

> In order to organize the Jewish population of the Warsaw Ghetto against the annihilation campaign of the occupation and in order to protect the Jewish population of Warsaw against traitors and agents who cooperate with the Nazis, a coordinating commission has been set up comprised of the Jewish Labor Bund and the Jewish National Committee. The latter in turn is composed of the following parties: Zionist Organization, Right Labor Zionist, Left Labor Zionist, Revisionist Party, Hechalutz, Hashomer Hatzair, and D'ror.

The memory of the Holocaust should not be distorted by reductionists of the right like Menachem Begin or reductionists of the left like Lazare. We owe its victims and heroes a true memorial. We need to say they were killed because they were Jews, both rich and poor, nationalist and assimilationist, leftist and rightist, religious and secular. That is why they died and that is why they resisted. Obscuring that issue by reductionism distracts us from dealing directly with the anti-Semitism and other forms of racism that have lives of their own in both socialist and capitalist societies.

*Daniel Steinmetz*

## LAZARE REPLIES

*New York City*

My purpose was not to reduce but to explain. Of course, ultimately all Jews were the targets of Nazi genocide, but it should be remembered that the original onslaught did not strike everyone at the same time and with the same force. The Nazis arrived in Warsaw in October 1939, decreed the ghetto a year later and only began the mass roundup of 300,000 or more Jews for the concentration camps in July 1942. By that time, an estimated 100,000 had already perished from starvation, disease and overwork. These first victims of the Holocaust were, by definition, the poor—those unable to afford bread or medicine or to buy their way out of the brutal forced-labor battalions. The Judenrat was blamed—primarily, but not solely, by the left—for compounding the misery by its regressive tax policies and by permitting corruption to flourish. Later on, in the nightmarish aftermath of the deportations, the Judenrat would be condemned for its shameful participation in these crimes. These are not experiences that promote communal unity; rather, they drive people at one another's throats.

I am not sure what Daniel Steinmetz would have me do. How does one explain the politics of the ghetto resistance without discussing frankly the conditions that gave it birth? The ghetto was gripped by a class struggle in the fullest sense of the term—a wide-ranging conflict between the comparatively well-off and the poor, between officialdom and the rank and file, between right and left, between appeasement or collaboration and resistance. The Judenrat's role in the mass deportations left it cursed in the eyes of the approximately 70,000 Warsaw Jews left behind. The Jewish Fighting Organization rushed to fill the void, intimidating the Judenrat and the ghetto police through force of arms and preparations for the uprising. Of course, leftists did not make up the entire resistance, but socialists and Communists, including many anti-Zionists, did dominate its leadership, a fact I find significant.

Somewhere, I suppose, there may be a perfect world in which an entire people would act in complete accord when faced with a calamity on the scale of the Holocaust, standing shoulder to shoulder, sharing all burdens equally and never penalizing one group to save another. Unfortunately, Jews are not such an impossibly perfect people, and the Warsaw of 1939-43 not such a perfect world.

One final note: Due to an error in construction, my article stated that the 300,000 victims of the deportations had somehow been previously assured by the Nazis that they and their families would be spared. It was actually the Jewish police who had received such assurances, which is how its cooperation was obtained.

*Daniel Lazare*

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# EDITORIALS.

## All Our Children

A little girl at an antinuclear rally in Chicago, held while the Catholic bishops were discussing the final version of their pastoral letter on war and peace, told a television reporter, "I don't see why they need nuclear weapons. Why can't they just get rid of them?"

Kids say the darndest things. The bishops at least got her message, for they commendably toughened their stand in favor of a nuclear freeze and against the first use of nuclear weapons. Like most adults, the bishops presumably know that getting rid of the bomb is not as easy as the latest generation to have its sleep broken by nightmares of a nuclear holocaust would like. The innocence of childhood speaks with a directness that more worldly adults might heed.

But adults in America haven't much time for children these days, as the articles by Barbara Ehrenreich and David

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Nasaw (page 597) and Tracy Freedman and David Weir (page 600) show. As a political constituency, children lack clout, and their parents have shown themselves willing—when it comes to other people's kids, of course—to vote for decreased funding for local schools and for candidates who promise to cut social programs.

As Ehrenreich and Nasaw suggest, adults in our society regard children with some ambivalence. To corporate America, they are numbers in the lucrative "youth market," while to their parents, their patriotic consumption makes them economic liabilities. Some groups on the right, who proclaim their devotion to the unborn, advocate putting the born to work as soon as they are old enough, thus converting them from liabilities into assets. The Administration seems to agree. With the help of Congress it has:

§ Slashed welfare benefits by more than $1 billion in the 1982 budget, making life more difficult for nearly 7 million children, many of them under the age of 8.

§ Trimmed Medicaid funding by $1 billion, thereby excluding 600,000 children from health care benefits.

§ Cut back food programs aimed specifically at children, such as the school lunch program (down 30 percent since 1981), which provides many children with the only nourishing meal they get all day.

§ Cut the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) by 28 percent in the 1983 budget (Congress restored all but 4 percent of the Administration's proposed cut), even though this program has been widely credited with reducing the infant mortality rate.

Of course poor nutrition can also have long-term ill effects on children, causing learning problems and increased vulnerability to environmental poisons. As Harlem Hospital's Dr. Mark Rapoport told Freedman and Weir, the WIC program reduces "medical problems in children in the long run."

Children *are* the long run, and the bucks we shortsightedly save on them now may have to be paid back with compound interest in the future. But the costs of lives destroyed must ultimately be assessed by the moral accounting by which societies determine whether they are civilized or not.

# Arming Education

The root problems of American education can be found in "A Nation at Risk," the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, but they are not the ones named by the commissioners. Those seventeen august educators, plus a token parent, toiling under a $785,000 grant and a mandate from the Department of Education, zeroed in on the length of the school day, the average load of homework and the teaching of the "new basics" (computer science, for example) as subjects for remedial action. No doubt there is room for improvement in such areas. But as they appear on the national report card, they sound more like effects than causes of the "tide of mediocrity" the commissioners see engulfing the country. And what is wrong with education turns out to be less a matter of school administration than of social and political direction.

Some problems pop up at first glance, as the study frames the educational malaise in the terms of an unremitting militarism. "We have been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament," the report says. Marching right along: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." Out come the big guns: "Our very future as a Nation and a people" is at risk.

Seen that way, education is just another line item in the national security budget: MX, Pershing 2, more homework, $C^3I$, summer sessions. Upgrading the educational infrastructure is indistinguishable from modernizing the missile command. Throughout, education is conceived of as an instrument (or weapon) to be used to secure "America's place in the world." There's a war on—against the Japanese, who "make automobiles more efficiently than Americans," against the South Koreans and "the world's most efficient steel mill," against the West Germans and their high-quality machine tools.

The fiercest competitor, of course, is the Soviet Union; American students are found to score lower on most achievement tests than they did "26 years ago when Sputnik was launched." What with the proliferation of frilly subjects such as driver ed, training for adulthood and foods and cooking, American students are in danger of losing the high-tech race to their Russian counterparts.

The problems that appear at second glance are, if anything, more insidious. In the paragraph of lip service the commissioners pay to matters "beyond . . . industry and commerce," they assert that "a high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture." What that means, shorn of its piety, is that education is another kind of instrument for demobilizing uncommon cultures that threaten the peace and undermine the reign of the free democrats who happen to dominate society.

Education Secretary Terrel Bell set up the commission two years ago to prove a political point that President Reagan and like-minded conservatives had been making for some time: public schooling in America has been seriously subverted by liberal theorists of educational permissiveness and of racial (and cultural) integration. The experts came up with a bunch of statistics detailing the educational mess, which was easy, since it is plain enough for anyone who ventures inside an inner-city grade school, or even a glassy, grassy suburban high school, to see.

But their proposals could not break free of the political confines inherent in the commission's mandate. "It's a rerun of Vietnam," one educator (who was not on the commission) said last week. "Instead of sending in Marines to beat peasants, they want to send in a small number of adults to pacify a large number of unruly children. Unfortunately," he concluded, "the kids' capacity for resistance is greatly underestimated by the occupying power."

Every generation seems to get the educational mess it de-

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serves; at least, it gets the response it provokes. The turmoil of the 1960s gave birth to educational reforms that were experimental, undisciplined, even chaotic—but innovative and enriching as well. The values and the attitudes of the Reagan years are repressive, conformist and competitive. The reforms prescribed for this case are managerial and instrumental, and they are more likely to augment the tide of mediocrity than reverse it.

# 'Stones for Bread'

*Buenos Aires*

While much of the Western world amuses itself with the controversy surrounding the Hitler diaries being published by the West German magazine *Stern*, Argentines find themselves reliving their own holocaust, an era of jackbooted rule. After months of revision, press leaks and consultations among the country's military rulers and their civilian opposition, President Reynaldo Bignone's regime released late last month its "final report" on the dirty war against leftist guerrillas and other dissidents in the 1970s.

The report, which took the form of a forty-five-minute government-produced television documentary and a twenty-two-page brief issued by the commanders of the army, air force and navy, dashed hopes that the Bignone regime, which will be replaced by a civilian government next year, would offer something approaching a full accounting of the fate of the 15,000 to 20,000 Argentines who disappeared during that struggle. Such an accounting is a minimum condition for beginning the process of national reconciliation, in the eyes of most political leaders, trade unionists and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. By refusing to extend to the civilian population even that slip of an olive branch, the beleaguered military, which will return to the barracks next January, ending more than seven years of misrule, has placed a major stumbling block on the road to civilian government.

Regarding the *desaparecidos*—the disappeareds—the report simply concluded that all who are not in exile or in hiding are presumed dead. The military took full responsibility for the brutal actions of the security forces in quelling the revolt, explaining that the extraordinary ("apocalyptic") circumstances in which the war was waged by leftist guerrillas necessitated drastic countermeasures.

The unrepentant tone of the report was echoed in the documentary, which showed fires, chaotic protests and mutilated bodies. The country was besieged, the announcer reminded the audience, by a huge and hidden army, whose soldiers wore no uniforms, carried no valid documents and had infiltrated every area of Argentine life. Some viewers noticed that the scenes of violence included incidents involving rightists, though they were not identified as such. Indeed, the subject of right-wing terrorism was not touched on, even though the military had protected, and even encouraged, the rightists' murderous rampages.

Such effrontery loosed a flood of criticism within Argentina and from abroad. Italy's President Sandro Pertini shot off a blistering telegram to Argentina's military junta condemning the report's "chilling cynicism . . . beyond human civility." The names of hundreds of Italians and Italo-Argentines, as well as of hundreds more from other European and South American countries, are on Argentina's unofficial roster of disappeareds. The Argentine Permanent Assembly for Human Rights pointed to "innumerable proofs that 80 percent of the detained-disappeared were kidnapped from their homes, on the street or at their workplaces before witnesses." Emilio Mignone, the country's leading human rights activist, took aim at the "television spectacular" and scoffed at government claims that it had faced 15,000 armed opponents. "If Argentina had 15,000 guerrillas," he told me, "today there would not be any Argentine Army, given the incompetence they showed during the Malvinas war." (Mignone's daughter, a social worker, disappeared after being abducted from his home by the security forces in 1976.) "This declaration is a ratification of our belief that there were no autonomous right-wing death squads acting without authorization—it was government policy," he said, warning that the military cannot confine the investigation of the "dirty war" to its own tribunals, as it plans to do. "The military cannot be both judge and accused," he said.

Human rights groups have long charged that the Argentine military waged an illegal campaign of kidnapping, torture and death against thousands of citizens, including hundreds of elderly people and pregnant women and more than 100 children under the age of 12. Few of the disappeareds have ever returned. Observers point out that although the battle against the guerrillas was won by the end of 1976, the repression continued unchecked for two more years.

About 2,000 young military officers took part in what one former well-placed policeman, now in exile, called "a pact of blood"—a brotherhood of kidnappers, torturers and executioners. This group was given free rein following the 1976 coup, which overthrew the shaky civilian government of Isabel Martínez de Péron. One top Western diplomat told me that the report was a sop to these officers—those who are either unrepentant or fearful that a civilian government will hold a Nuremberg-style tribunal. "The whole effort looked more like the armed forces trying to shore up their ranks," he said. "The military didn't even propose a starting point for national reconciliation. It gave the civilians stones for bread."

Many Argentines say that unless civilian courts are independent of the military, their newfound freedom will be illusory. "If it happened here yesterday it can happen elsewhere tomorrow, unless the responsible are judged," warns Hebe de Bonafini, head of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a human rights group. For six years members of the group have maintained a weekly vigil in front of the presidential palace, demanding that the regime tell them where their children are. "I don't want the body of my kids and a lie," Bonafini told me. "I want to know who killed them and why."

MARTIN ANDERSEN

*Martin Andersen writes for* Newsweek *in Buenos Aires.*

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# MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

*London*

To return to the old country after a longish absence is to find oneself feeling like a nervous guest in some reactionary Lilliput. In one of his more extreme moments, Evelyn Waugh described his experience of Labor government in Britain as "living under foreign occupation." I think I now know the effect he was striving to convey. As I arrived, Margaret Thatcher had just called for a return to "Victorian values"; the British Navy had announced that it would intercept a boatload of Argentine war widows if they came anywhere near the Falkland Islands; and our senior Tory historian had just fallen for a palpable hoax designed to sweeten the memory of the Third Reich. Welcome home, I thought savagely as I paid for the taxi with a fistful of the new £1 coins, which serve to remind us that the national currency is Lilliputian too. The next morning, *The Times* of London gave prominent and respectful coverage to a bovine speech from the Queen's husband, His Grace the Duke of Edinburgh, to the effect that nuclear weapons are an indispensable deterrent. And the Catholic hierarchy announced that it was considering terminating the leave of absence that has allowed Msgr. Bruce Kent to serve as a very able and charming chairman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Meanwhile, every meaningful index of productivity and output is on the decline. Unemployment is almost at the 4 million mark, and it is dawning on ever larger towns and localities that this time their jobless condition is not cyclical but permanent. The health and welfare services are flayed to the bone. Public transport in the main cities is a horrible joke—and seeing one's fellow citizens fighting to get on the cramped and scarce buses is, among other things, an easy education in the spread of racial prejudice. One hears foul remarks much more often these days. One always did, of course, but it's possible to remember a time when the party in power wasn't making them as well. The almost $4 billion that is to be squandered on buying Trident missiles from the United States (the single largest investment decision ever made by a British government) has to come out of somebody's hide. Thatcher and her advisers are evidently quite content if the underprivileged blame one another.

And yet I am prepared to wager my last £1 coin that the Conservative Party wins the next election with relative ease. As I write, smart opinion favors an election in June, or possibly October. The Tories are ready to fight—they have nominated all their candidates and the opinion polls still reflect the fading but imperishable memory of the Falklands war. Labor, by contrast, is stuck with a bankrupt and ramshackle machine. And every nomination battle (known here as selection, or reselection) reminds the voters that the party is split on everything from cruise missiles to the nationalization of banks. Also, though it is true that British politics are more parliamentary than presidential, the recent tendency has been to view elections as contests between rival prime ministers. In the wavering and senile figure of Michael Foot, chosen as a typical British compromise between the old left and the soft right, Labor has found perhaps the only candidate whom *nobody* wants, or can imagine, as a prime minister. Thatcher, for her part, sticks to the Caligula principle ("Let them hate us as long as they fear us"). She attracts great dislike, but few actually despise her.

There is only one issue on which a significant number of voters do not trust Thatcher, and that is nuclear defense. It has seeped home, even to quite apolitical suburbanites and ex-officers, that the projected American missiles are beyond British control. This essentially insular criticism has led to other and harder questions: "Why weren't we consulted?" "Whose war are we expected to die in?" "I don't like the sound of that Reagan fellow, do you?" And so on. What one might call demotic skepticism is on the rise.

Alas, Labor has not found a convincing voice in which to speak about what people in pubs call "The Bomb." Its formal position is for unilateral disarmament and the expulsion of American bases and missiles from the country. But this has been its position before; set aside when in office by the strong group of pro-NATO and pronuclear right-wingers who had, and still have, commanding positions in the inner councils of the party and the trade unions. Thus, the brave women who keep vigil outside the cruise missile bases around the clock every day, and who have shamed thousands of others into criticism and even into action, are not convinced that Labor would keep its promises. And the undecided, unimpressed by Foot's contortions over the Falklands, have the impression that Labor is riddled with feebleminded pacifism. So the party has the worst of both worlds.

The strategists and thinkers, if such there be, of the Democratic Party might do worse than spend a few days in England. They will learn, if they care to, that the cry of "compassion" doesn't get one very far in the face of a determined conservatism. That merely shouting about unemployment is unconvincing when there is rivalry between workers with jobs and workers without them (and, it might be added, when workers recall that it was the previous government that had recourse to unemployment as a crude weapon against inflation). They will learn that, on matters of defense, a party that contradicts itself, or tries to outbid the right on the national security issue, will be found implausible by the electors. They will learn that, in a time of unprecedented economic dislocation, traditional votes cannot be taken for granted.

Thatcher may decide not to hold a smash-and-grab election this summer, or even this autumn. She, too, believes in "staying the course" to full term. And she has a reputation for resolution, dearly bought in the South Atlantic, to consider. The Reaganites are pressing her to "go for it" before the missile deployment in the autumn, in order that her victory may be passed off as an endorsement of cruise and Pershing. The sad truth is that, barring unthinkable accidents, she can win next year too. There are rewards in politics for people who mean what they say, and despite the odd combination of huge deficits and high unemployment, the British seem willing to give sado-monetarism another chance.

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# ARTICLES.

REAGAN'S WAR ON CHILDREN—I

# Kids as Consumers And Commodities

BARBARA EHRENREICH AND DAVID NASAW

While Nancy Reagan was publishing her second book, *To Love a Child*, a tearful ("I weep easily," she has said, "which can be embarrassing sometimes") tribute to the joys of intergenerational affection, her husband's Administration was pocketing the lunch money of 3 million American children and depriving millions more of subsidized snacks, dinners and breakfasts. Confronted by these conflicting signals from the nation's First Family, a sensitive foreign observer like E.T. might conclude that there is an unacknowledged tension in Americans' attitudes toward children.

Within the middle-class family, parental love appears to be far from spontaneous. Parents do not expect to love their offspring at first sight; they must first undergo the uncertain process of "bonding." In the suburbs, bumper stickers confront drivers with the unsettling question, "Have You Hugged Your Child Today?" Returning to update his classic 1919 history of the family, Arthur Calhoun would find that children had slipped from the center of the American family to the status of live-in guests who are finally beginning to wear out their welcome.

The Reagan Administration's war on children—most directly in cuts in the social welfare programs that so many children depend on for shelter and sustenance—builds on a deeper American ambivalence toward the young. In a culture dominated by laissez-faire ideology, children's status can only be precarious; to put it bluntly, children do not pay their own way. The New Right, for all its rhetorical devotion to children and family, is quite clear on this point. In a 1982 interview, Connaught Marshner, chairman of the Pro-Family Coalition, proposed to us that children make economic contributions to their families, adding that "the humanistic reforms of the nineteenth century made children into economic liabilities." From a hardheaded economic perspective, she is right. Rejected by the labor market, children subsist on the charitable contributions of their parents or, failing that, make do on the meager offerings of the state. Economically, they are on a par with other labor market rejects, like welfare recipients and unemployed black males, and prone to subconscious labeling as "bums" and "idlers."

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Roughly speaking, the status of children peaked during the Progressive era, when middle-class optimism was running high. Social scientists designated the new century the "century of the child," and predicted that the new generation would lead immigrant families to Americanization and the American economy to new productive heights. During the next few decades the reasons for optimism declined considerably, but children were still holding their own. In the post-World War II period, in fact, they became the indispensable proof of adult achievement, without which no man or woman could claim to be "adjusted," mature or even securely heterosexual. The first signs of America's disillusionment with its offspring can be traced to the launching of Sputnik in 1957, which occurred soon after the advent of rock-and-roll. Certainly "Ivan" had been doing his homework. Both phenomena raised troubling questions about how young people in this country were passing their time. If, in the 1950s, it appeared that American kids were too soft or too stupid to beat the enemy, in the 1960s they *were* the enemy. Beginning with *Rosemary's Baby* (which ends with the birth of a devil child), a series of films, including *The Exorcist* I and II, *Children of the Damned* and *The Omen* I and II, nurtured the adult suspicion that children, even babies, are potential demons, assistants to demons or matricidal maniacs. In the 1970s, psychologically hip adults often opted not to have children but to cultivate the "child in themselves," while the unhip organized to repress the libidos of the young by curbing sex education and the availability of contraceptives. Adult America was prepared, at some unconscious level, for an Administration that could seriously propose that fourth graders contribute to the fight against inflation by eating ketchup for lunch.

Like other economically nonproductive and socially suspect groups, children in this century have had to find ways to defend their right to subsistence and to maintain a modicum of self-respect. For children the key "strategy" has been consumerism. Ever since the first nickelodeons opened their doors almost eighty years ago, the young have done their part to keep the wheels of commerce turning. Neither recessions nor depressions nor declining fertility rates have slowed the growth of the kiddie markets. According to a survey by the Rand Youth Poll for the National Restaurant Association, while the teen-age population declined 6.6 percent between 1975 and 1980, teen spending rose more than 50 percent. Trade journals—with little else to glow about in the depressed 1980s—report enthusiastically on the continuing growth of the kiddie markets, accelerated in the last few years by the volatile commerce in video games.

Children are the last of the big time spenders. Marketing experts predict that they will not only increase their purchases of toys, games, cosmetics, soft drinks and designer jeans, tops and sneakers, but will double their consumption of snacks and become major buyers of big-ticket items like audio and video equipment and home computers. In many households, children are replacing their mothers as chief

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decision makers on some purchases. As *Seventeen* magazine reported in a full-page ad in the January 17 *New York Times*, the child has become the "Speaker of the House." Children play a major, often *the* major, role in choosing their families' foods, appliances, diet sodas, breakfast cereals, toothpaste and soap. As *Seventeen*'s ad noted, "Last year they personally spent 37% of the family food budget, or $13 billion."

For children, the marketplace provides a kind of autonomous zone, which insensitive, interfering and pushy adults cannot easily enter. By choosing what, where, when and how to spend, children create their own subculture in opposition to the adult world. In the 1950s, they organized that subculture around comic books and *MAD* magazine (with its vicious satires of the adult-dominated consumer culture). In the early 1960s, preteen girls horrified adults with their frenzied worship of the Beatles and all things Beatle-related; for years rock remained a youth enclave almost impenetrable to adults. In the 1980s, children aggregate around video games and baffle large corporations by unpredictably switching their allegiance from Pac Man and Ms. Pac Man to Donkey Kong and Frogger. In the latest minifad, the Valley Girls and their imitators satirize consumerism even as they celebrate it—making the whole enterprise look pointless and affected. ("Like, gag me with a *spoon*!")

It is as consumers that children have been able to win a supportive constituency among wealthy and powerful adults. Manufacturers of retail goods (and not only those consumed solely by the young) have long promoted the idea that children are worthy of high levels of parental subsidy. Both through their advertising and the TV programs their advertising pays for, they reliably endorse the notion that children are fun to be around and that their needs—whether for Pampers or Pop Rocks—merit serious adult consideration. As Ellen Peck, author of *Pronatalism* and a leading advocate of nonparenthood, observed of some of the more cloying TV commercials, "Frankly, one wonders what is being sold: Pampers? Or babies? . . . Hershey bars or children's faces?" Thus, by becoming consumers, children came to be promoted as commodities—either indispensable adjuncts to adulthood, as in the fervently pronatalist ideology of the 1950s, or as interesting additions to a household, as they are more likely to be portrayed today.

But the consumerist strategy has its psychological costs. For one thing, it strains whatever affection parents spontaneously feel for their young. Kiddie market manufacturers spend $800 million a year on television ads urging children to wheedle, whine or harangue their way to new acquisitions. These ads find their way not only to the homes of the upper middle class but to the homes of the unemployed and the chronically hard pressed, where the expense of a single Smurf figure (from "the collectible world of Smurfs") could sabotage a family meal. For the poor as well as the merely thrifty, nothing undermines parental affection more decisively than a trip to the supermarket with a couple of TV-wise junior consumers. Any vestigial sentimentalization evaporates; the kids are revealed as "economic liabilities" or, worse, as the real-life counterparts of the filmic monsters who devour their parents and entire civilizations.

Children themselves pay an immediate psychological price for their dual role as dependent consumers and likable commodities. In the emotional economy of the American family, they are expected to be "cute"; that is what they learn from prime time programming and very often from the adults they encounter in real life. But from a child's vantage point, cuteness involves a performance in which dignity must constantly be sacrificed for attention—a parody of adulthood which exploits the handicaps (small stature, lack of motor coordination, defective pronunciation) of the performer. Diminutive television star Gary Coleman would not be cute, for all his wit, if he achieved his full growth; toddlers are cute not only because they walk but because they stumble. (And, of course, what is cute one moment, like a chocolate-smeared face, may be punishable the next.) For many children, the strain of being cute leads to a state of perpetual embarrassment, manifested either as a desperate silliness or a guarded withdrawal from adult contact.

Women, finding themselves in a similar role as financial dependents and displayers of obligatory cuteness, took immediate measures to change their situation. Betty Friedan advocated women's return to the work force because the housewives she surveyed for *The Feminine Mystique* seemed to be losing their sanity and self-respect. The worst she could say about them was that they had been "infantalized," and the best she could suggest was that they grow up and get out of the house. But for children there is no such clear-cut escape. All that remains is to burrow deeper into the consumer culture, while, of course, dipping deeper into their parents' pockets.

Consumerism, whether as acquiescence or escape, is always a limited and risky strategy. Moon Zappa (daughter of Frank and template for the Val Gals) may cruise the shopping malls with a full deck of credit cards, but other little girls must nag their parents or learn to shoplift. In poor neighborhoods, small children hustle pizza parlor patrons for quarters to play Frogger; some of them will soon be big enough to mug pedestrians for the wherewithal to buy "muscle-builder (radio/tape deck) boxes." Seventy-four years ago, Jane Addams reported from Chicago that much of the "petty pilfering" that went on was a result of the

### THE CASUALTY LIST

Twelve million children—more than one fourth of the total—now live in poverty. . . . 7.9 million of these children receive A.F.D.C. or other public assistance; 4.1 million of them do not. . . . Since Ronald Reagan took office, 2 million children have entered the ranks of the poor. . . . More than half a million children are wards of the state. . . . 5.26 million children live in homes where one parent is unemployed. . . . Nearly 1 million children depend on single mothers for support.

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children's need for nickels for the nickelodeon. In the 1980s, the nickels have become $5 bills and some of the petty pilferers carry guns. So long as children are both financially dependent on their parents and exposed to a spectacle of consumer temptations, the disjunction between their "needs" and their families' incomes will regularly generate child outlaws. As the incidence and intensity of child crime increases, adult sympathy for children as a class declines.

The effect of the Reagan Administration's policies has been to destabilize what is already an economically precarious situation for children. No age group, of course, can be counted a winner in the mammoth shift from spending for social welfare to spending for the military, or the retreat from governmental responsibility for the environment. But for children there is an especially nasty twist to the combination of deregulation and cutbacks in social welfare programs. The slashes in Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps and categorical nutrition programs pose a direct threat to the health of millions of children. In addition, the cuts are a clear signal to all adults, including those on the verge of poverty, that this Administration believes the sole responsibility for a child's welfare lies with his or her immediate kin. Lose your job or gain a mouth to feed and it is, more so than at any time since the advent of the New Deal, *your* problem. With hard times and a shrinking welfare state, children look more like economic liabilities and less like little blessings—a shift of perspective that no doubt contributes to the recent recession-associated rise in child abuse.

At the same time that the Administration is shedding financial responsibility for children, it is encouraging their exploitation as consumers. During the previous three Administrations there was a definite, if glacial, drift toward upgrading children's television. The Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission at least considered proposals that would require the networks to offer a minimal amount of educational programming and clamp down on the more outrageous advertising claims (for example, that a breakfast consisting largely of sugar will endow the eater with the strength of a superhero). Although the sugar lobby and its allies in the toy industry blocked the F.T.C. from cracking down on commercials, the networks were sufficiently apprehensive about a crackdown on pap programming that they began to offer some more intelligent fare, like CBS's short-lived *Thirty Minutes*. Then came Reagan; and, according to Peggy Charren, the director of Action for Children's Television, "It was as if a signal went out through the industry." The networks dropped their quality programs, and the F.T.C. started shrugging off consumer complaints about commercials, including some that Charren believes are deceptive enough to be "clearly illegal." All that remained to protect children from even more frequent and mendacious commercials was the industry's own code, which was dropped after it became the target of an antitrust suit by the Justice Department. While many industrial nations regulate advertising for children and offer generous social welfare programs, the United States moves further into the anarchy of the marketplace, where it is every man for himself—and little boys and girls for themselves.

A truly pro-child public policy should be based on the recognition that in many ways the needs of children are like those of any subordinate social group: they need economic security, and they need dignity and respect. Since we do not, and should not, expect children to work for a living, we can guarantee their economic security only through a program of income support, and this should be pegged to a level high enough to sustain children through the vagaries of their family fortunes. An income-support program designed to help children (unlike our present welfare system, which is designed to discipline adults) would have a positive impact far beyond its immediate beneficiaries. If all children had a claim on public services and resources—day care, health services, etc.—no child could be regarded as an economic burden by the very adults he or she must look to for love.

Beyond that, children need some source of dignity other than consumerism. Some countries, like China and Cuba, build children's sense of dignity by enlisting them in a collective enterprise. We who would no doubt reject a U.S. equivalent of the Red Guards or Young Pioneers have left our children to find autonomy and purpose in the hands of Atari, Mattel and McDonald's. We seem to lack the confidence to treat children as fellow persons; we prefer to see them as cute rather than as competent; we would rather leave their fantasies to the kiddie market than engage them in our own. Our abdication of responsibility reflects our own condition in a society where, as Paul Goodman observed, there is very little work that is worth a man's (or woman's) time. If we cannot collectively give dignity and meaning to childhood, it is perhaps because we have not yet found these things in our adult lives. □

DRAWINGS BY SEYMOUR CHWAST

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REAGAN'S WAR ON CHILDREN—II

# Polluting the Most Vulnerable

TRACY FREEDMAN AND DAVID WEIR

A great deal of press attention has been paid to Environmental Protection Agency appointees' dismantling of environmental laws, but the harmful consequences of their policies have drawn little notice. In particular, signs of the growing health crisis for children, who are substantially more sensitive than adults to the toxic effects of many pollutants, have been all but ignored by reporters and regulators alike.

Formerly rare, more than 6,000 new cases of cancer in children are reported each year. Cancer is now the second leading cause of childhood death, after accidents, and much of it is thought to be environmental in origin. An apparent explosion of learning disabilities and a rise in national demand for "special education" is linked by many experts to children's exposures to chemical neurotoxins. Despite years of preventive government programs, one in twenty-five children—and one in four inner-city black children—suffer from low-level lead poisoning, which causes irreversible brain damage and behavioral problems.

For many children, the growing burden of environmental contaminants and Reagan's environmental policies have proved a disaster which could promise a lifetime of reduced potential and debilitating disease.

Regulations that did not adequately protect children when they *were* enforced are no longer being enforced. Funding for research on the effects of environmental pollutants on the young, which was begun by the Carter Administration, has been discontinued. In its 1982 and 1983 budgets, this Administration cut E.P.A. research and development funds by nearly 24 percent, including a 69 percent cut in water-quality research, eliminating studies of toxic matter in drinking water (which many scientists think is a major source of cancer); a 42 percent cut in pesticide research; a 94 percent cut in radiation research; and an 87 percent cut in pollutant studies. And last December, the Office of Management and Budget floated a proposal to cut the E.P.A.'s 1984 research budget by an additional 23 percent, which would mean a more than 50 percent decline in funding since Reagan took office.

The President and his appointees have also fought the banning of certain suspected cancer-causing substances. Two that are particularly dangerous to children are formaldehyde and DEHP (di [2-ethylhexyl] Phthalate), both of which have been proved to cause cancer in laboratory animals. Formaldehyde is used in many common items—wall paneling, pressed-wood furniture, permanent press clothing—and thousands of tons of it are produced every year. DEHP, which is added to plastic to make it soft and pliable, is present in an alarming number of baby products—bottles, toys and pacifiers, for example. It also can leach from plastic tubes used in electric milking machines, contaminating the milk. Both formaldehyde and DEHP were targeted for regulation by the E.P.A. during the Carter Administration, partly because they posed a cancer risk to infants.

Last spring, however, attempts to regulate both chemicals were abandoned. John Hernandez, then the E.P.A.'s Deputy Administrator, held a series of closed-door "science courts" with chemical and other industry representatives, to which only two scientists not employed by the industry were invited. Upon the completion of those "hearings," Assistant Administrator John Todhunter ruled that neither DEHP nor formaldehyde was enough of a cancer risk to warrant regulation. Todhunter made his decision despite the opposition of the American Cancer Society, the World Health Organization and researchers from seven Federal agencies. The E.P.A.'s carcinogen assessment chief, Dr. Roy Albert, subsequently resigned because of his disagreement with Todhunter's decision and other agency rulings.

"The sensible part of the scientific community considers formaldehyde a likely human carcinogen, and I do too," Dr. Albert said in a telephone interview. "If you start giving credence to P.R. men and the formaldehyde industry, you're losing your grip on reality."

Jackie Warren, senior staff attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group now suing the E.P.A. over the formaldehyde decision, said, "This Administration wants to redefine the principle for assessing cancer risk to a point so high that nothing will ever qualify. At this rate, nothing's going to be done about formaldehyde, or any other chemical, until there are dead bodies stacked up in the streets."

Reagan's E.P.A. has also abdicated its responsibility for seeing that toxic substances found in areas where children play are cleaned up. Last October, Assistant Administrator Rita Lavelle rejected the State of Arkansas' request for funds to remove oil-laden dirt contaminated by PCBs, which have been linked to liver and blood diseases and cancer, from a public alley in Fort Smith, despite concentrations reaching an astonishing 133,000 parts per million parts of soil, or 13 percent by weight. In rejecting Arkansas' request for $8,000 to erect a temporary fence around the site, Lavelle argued that "in order for a child to consume the *acute lethal dose* of PCBs, the child would have to eat about 150 grams of oil-laden dirt, the equivalent of about three large candy bars." (Emphasis added.) Lavelle ignored the effects of far lower concentrations of PCBs on test animals; her only concern was whether a child might bolt down a fatal amount of the contaminated soil.

Confronted by the extensive contamination at Times Beach and other sites throughout Missouri, the agency at-

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*Tracy Freedman and David Weir are staff writers at the Center for Investigative Reporting in San Francisco.* *This story was sponsored by the center's Project on Children and Environmental Regulations. The authors wish to thank the Children's Defense Fund for its invaluable assistance.*

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tempted to relax the standard for "safe" levels of the most toxic form of dioxin, a chemical so lethal that one forty-thousandth of a gram can kill a two-pound animal. In deciding whether to clean up fifty dioxin-contaminated sites, the agency proposed setting the "safe" level at more than 10,000 times that found at Love Canal, in Niagara Falls, New York, after the cleanup. E.P.A. internal documents, which were leaked to the Environmental Defense Fund, estimate that some children playing in the dioxin-laden dirt in Missouri have as high as a seven-in-ten chance of developing cancer—and are, according to one agency attorney, human "guinea pigs."

But the action that would have been most harmful to children was the Administration's attempt to nullify the regulations on leaded gasoline. That crusade was carried out by Vice President Bush's Task Force on Regulatory Relief, in response to complaints from oil and gas refiners. The task force recommended "reforms" that would have doubled the permissible level of lead in the air. Lead in the air has been linked to lead poisoning, which causes brain damage and behavioral problems in children, and the move would have reversed nearly a century's efforts to protect the young from overexposure to a substance whose harmful effects have been incontrovertibly established.

Even before Reagan came to office, the E.P.A.'s record on lead was compromised. From 1972 to 1976, while regulations reducing lead in gasoline were delayed by industry, an estimated 20 million children were exposed to dangerous lead concentrations. At least half a million of those children, by the most conservative estimates, incurred low-level lead poisoning. During this time the E.P.A. also buckled under to industry and for years delayed a generic standard for lead in the air. Clarence Ditlow of the Center for Auto Safety called this delay "one of the most tragic oversights this country has gone through." And David Schoenbrod, who as an attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council took the E.P.A. to court over lead standards on numerous occasions, in a 1980 book called the government's tactics "a prostitution of science and a rip-off of the taxpayers."

Despite the 1976 gasoline standard, lead is still a health hazard. Indeed, if a healthy environment for children were really a political priority, the current exposure levels would be considered a national emergency.

§ Thirteen years after the passage of the Clean Air Act, 600,000 tons of lead are released into the environment every year, and only half the states have set air-quality standards.

§ Canned foods, especially juices and condensed milk products consumed by infants, carry high levels of lead, but they are unregulated by the Food and Drug Administration.

§ As many as 50 million housing units built before 1960 (when the paint industry began lowering lead levels in its products) may contain paint dangerously high in lead, despite the millions of dollars the Department of Housing and Urban Development has directed toward removing the problem. In only a small number of these units have lead levels been reduced.

There are few substances more cumulatively harmful to children than lead. If an adult ate a lead paint chip the size of a postage stamp every day over a period of a few months, he or she might develop headaches; the identical portion consumed daily by a child for the same period of time could cause permanent brain damage or death. Lead in the air, in the soil and in household dust is absorbed by thousands of youngsters every year. Most of that lead is emitted by cars burning leaded gasoline.

Despite the evidence that children continue to be exposed to dangerous amounts of lead, Reagan slashed funds for lead screening and poisoning prevention programs by 25 percent in his fiscal 1982 budget and shifted part of the burden for enforcing the present standards to the states, where other children's programs are competing for limited funds.

As a result, cities with the most serious lead poisoning problems will receive from a third to a half less than they did in 1981. According to a study conducted by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Jersey City, projects a 47 percent cut in funding for lead poisoning programs in the next fiscal year and a 75 percent reduction in the number of children screened; Cleveland expects a 46 percent cut, with 19 percent fewer children screened.

Nevertheless, former E.P.A. Administrator Anne Burford insisted last summer that relaxing the lead standard would not harm children. Burford made her statement despite an internal report by Joel Schwartz of the E.P.A.'s energy economics branch, which found that doubling the permissible level of lead emissions in the atmosphere per year would increase the incidence of lead poisoning among black 2- and 3-year-olds in inner-city areas by an average of 2 to 4 percent. Schwartz estimated that in Chicago, cases of lead poisoning among 6- and 7-year-olds would rise by 9 percent; in New York City, by 14 percent; and in Louisville, Kentucky, by 44 percent. In 1983, relaxing the standard would save industry at most $100 million, while the cost to society—in hospitalization, special education, mental health care and reduced adult earning power for the poisoned children—could reach as high as $1.4 billion.

In contrast, between 1976 and 1980 the lead content of gasoline was reduced by 32 percent, resulting in an average drop of 37 percent in the levels of lead in the blood of children tested by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

Fortunately, the task force proposals were not adopted. Determined lobbying by a coalition of environmentalists, state and Federal officials, pediatricians and children's advocates forced the Administration to back down. An editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* complained that environmentalists had manipulated an "emotional issue" in order to "derail Reaganite deregulatory efforts," but in truth, it was a small but important victory for children in a battle that should never have been waged.

While the scientific proof of lead's harmfulness is overwhelming, there is no similar mass of evidence on the special dangers to children that newer chemicals and pollutants might pose. Many scientists believe some of them are hazardous (and the E.P.A. sponsored a conference in 1981

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on children's vulnerability to pollutants), but the data needed for proof are lacking. The little that is known about children's sensitivity to pollutants gives cause for concern.

Even infants in the womb are exposed to dangerous chemicals—some natural, some synthetic, many of them suspected of causing cancer or birth defects. A blizzard of chemicals penetrates the placenta and affects the fetus when it is acutely vulnerable. And a baby's first nourishment—mother's milk, in many cases—may be laced with toxic pesticides that are in the food chain.

Toddlers ingest lead, mercury and other metals that are mixed with the dirt in parks and playgrounds, which are often located on former industrial sites. Because their bodies cannot break down these substances, up to 40 percent of the poison may be absorbed, twice what older people might absorb under similar circumstances. Wooden playground equipment is often saturated with arsenic or some other toxic chemical as a preservative. Because the skin of infants and young children is highly permeable, they may absorb these substances by brushing against a slide or swing. Hundreds of thousands of children between the ages of 3 and 6 ingest lead by nibbling on chips of sweet-tasting paint, which they find flaking off the walls of houses in which they live or play.

By the time they are 8 years old, most children's organs filter toxins more efficiently than their parents' do, but for younger children the process takes much longer. An infant's liver, for example, takes seven times as long as an adult's to detoxify certain drugs and chemicals. The brain, nervous system, immune system and liver of an infant are especially susceptible to environmental pollutants. A child's brain grows in spurts, and its sensitivity to pollutants may fluctuate daily.

"There is tremendous concern today by toxicologists that the brain may be the most vulnerable organ to environmental assault," says Dr. Bambi Young of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "It is becoming clear to the health community that even modest exposures are compromising the child's ability to learn and function in the classroom."

Studies of the effects of hazardous-waste spills show that pollutants are more damaging to children than to adults. In San Jose, California, fifteen children who lived near the Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation's plant—where 60,000 gallons of industrial solvents (including TCE, trichloroethylene, which has caused cancer in laboratory animals) had leaked from underground storage tanks, contaminating drinking water—were born with what state officials describe as a "cluster" of congenital heart defects. A group of their parents sued Fairchild, claiming that the chemicals had caused birth defects, miscarriages and infant deaths, though health officials are doubtful that a causal link between the accident and the increased incidence of heart defects can be established.

Children who played in the streams and landfill near Love Canal suffered a disproportionately high rate of minimal brain dysfunction, while their parents did not. Dr. Beverly Paigen, an environmental health researcher who recently concluded a study of those children, believes the dozens of neurotoxins buried at Love Canal caused many children to have learning problems. U.S. government tests have shown that chemical levels in the air were well within the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's limits for adult workers.

Children who receive poor medical care or suffer from vitamin deficiencies or malnutrition are especially vulnerable to the effects of pollution. Even before the Administration began making cuts in the food stamp program and in programs specifically designed to improve children's nutritional intake, nearly one in two black children between the ages of 6 and 11 suffered from Vitamin A deficiency. Sixty-five percent of all 2- and 3-year-olds did not have enough calcium in their diets, and well over 90 percent of them did not get enough iron. Children with vitamin and mineral deficiencies have lowered resistance to the effects of cancer-causing pesticides like DDT, harmful metals like lead and cadmium, and persistent toxins like PCBs. Children whose diets do not provide sufficient iron, for example, can suffer irreversible brain damage from toxic materials.

Children who have been robbed of their natural curiosity and vitality by environmental poisons seem dull and apathetic to their teachers. "We all respond to kids in terms of how well they behave," points out Nancy Amidei, director of the Food Research and Action Center. "We don't stimulate listless kids, and we spend very little time with incorrigible or difficult kids."

Dr. Frank Oski, chairman of the department of pediatrics at the State University of New York's Upstate Medical Center, believes "90 percent of the difference in performance in aptitude and achievement between black and white kids is dietary and environmental in nature." He calls the current epidemic of low-level lead poisoning "an example of how the environment can produce a whole generation of intellectually disadvantaged people." Such young people, says Kenneth Keniston, former chairman and director of the now disbanded Carnegie Council on Children, "are systematically trained for failure."

The young serve as a kind of early warning system for environmental contamination, like the green and white spider plants residents of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, placed on their windowsills in the belief that the leaves would change color when radioactivity levels rose. Unfortunately, the Federal government has not used the ample data it has on children's vulnerability to pollutants to devise standards that are relevant to them. Rather, the government regards children as though they had adult tolerances.

For example, the E.P.A. sets pesticide-residue standards for more than 500 chemicals found in food. It does this by juggling information about people's eating habits and information about what levels of these chemicals are "safe." But the system discriminates against the young. First, the E.P.A. uses the average diet of a 132-pound male teen-ager to compute the acceptable pesticide exposures for infants, despite the fact that their lower body weight and limited diet make them more vulnerable. Second, although the E.P.A. makes adjustments for infants' high milk intake,

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its regulations are based on adult levels of consumption. Acceptable levels for children are arrived at by arbitrarily multiplying the presumed safe adult concentrations by a factor of 10 or 100. Third, unlike the F.D.A., which encourages pharmaceutical companies to test their products on young animals, the E.P.A. uses only grown animals in testing pesticides.

A mass experiment beginning in 1981, in which Hawaiian infants and pregnant women were the involuntary subjects, may yield more definitive evidence on the effects of pesticide-tainted foods. For periods of as long as seventeen months in some cases, residents of Oahu unwittingly drank milk that was heavily contaminated with heptachlor, a carcinogenic pesticide. Although the E.P.A. banned the substance years ago, Hawaii's politically influential pineapple growers, principally Del Monte and Castle & Cooke, were allowed to phase out its use gradually. Oahu dairy cows had been fed pineapple tops that were contaminated with the pesticide, and last summer laboratory tests of their milk found that it contained more than seven times the acceptable level of heptachlor; samples of human breast milk contained dosages that were three times the E.P.A.'s "safe" level. Sales of the contaminated milk were not halted until virtually the entire population of Oahu had been exposed.

Worse, although the E.P.A. had known for ten years that the heptachlor standard for milk was obsolete, only last September did the agency suggest that the F.D.A. revise it. The F.D.A. did so, cutting it to one third of its previous level, but a former pesticide expert for Dow Chemical, Ted Norton, maintains that the new standard is inadequate to protect infants less than seven months old.

The government's air pollution regulations, like its pesticide-residue standards, offer only minimal protection to the young. Although the Reagan Administration and its allies in industry have attacked the Clean Air Act of 1970 as an example of "overregulation," it in fact underregulates most of the pollutants especially dangerous to children.

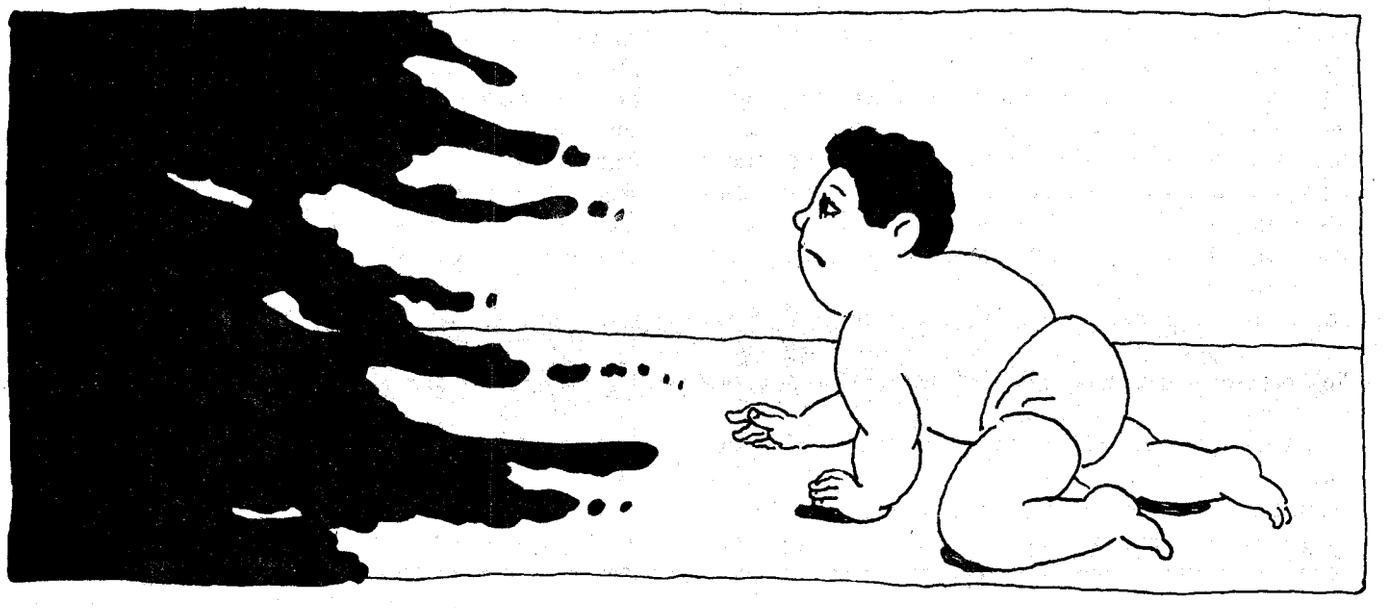
E.P.A. regulations fail to take into account the differences in size, exposure and rate of absorption between adults and children. If they did, everything from the placement of air monitors to the choice of which air pollutants to regulate would have to be changed drastically.

Under the Clean Air Act, the E.P.A. has established "safe" levels of exposure for seven "criteria pollutants"—all of them well-known byproducts of smokestack industries. In setting those standards, the agency relied on tests performed on healthy college students. From this data it then extrapolated the standards for infants, the elderly, asthmatics and people with heart conditions. To obtain a 100-fold "margin of safety," for example, the "safe" level for adults was reduced by a factor of ten. There are several major flaws in this approach.

For one thing, the agency considers "adverse effects" to be skin rashes, burning eyes and the like. A pollutant that does not cause such problems, even if it might cause chronic diseases or cancers years after exposure, would not be regulated.

Also, the E.P.A.'s "hazardous pollutant standards," established to control newer and more complex substances in the air, fail to do just that. Only four such standards have been promulgated to date, none of them during the present Administration. Scores of other toxins that have been developed in recent years, such as TCE, may be even more dangerous, but remain unregulated as well. None of the approximately 1,000 new chemicals that flood the marketplace each year are tested for their effects on young animals because there is no law requiring such testing. Considering the plethora of exotic new chemical mutagens, teratogens, carcinogens and poisons, that amounts to playing Russian roulette with children's lives—and those of generations to come.

Even if designated E.P.A. Administrator William Ruckelshaus is confirmed and purges all of the agency's probusiness Reagan appointees, the regulations that ignore children will still be on the books. Even assuming that the new Administrator and his staff are fully committed to protecting the environment, the question remains: Who at the



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E.P.A. will revamp the existing rules to protect society's most vulnerable members?

As a first step, the E.P.A. and the F.D.A. should test the effects of all new chemicals on young animals to determine the long-term threats they pose to those with the longest life expectancy—children. Second, all environmental and health laws should be amended with the special vulnerability of the young in mind. Two good places to begin are the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, both of which come before Congress for renewal this year.

Protecting the environment should not be a partisan issue, but protecting children seems to be nobody's issue. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have expressed interest in programs to safeguard them. However, a potentially effective forum for discussing issues that affect children, including environmental health protection, is the new Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, founded and chaired by Democratic Representative George Miller, a strong advocate for the young.

But while the politicians on Capitol Hill debate dollars and statistics and abstract threats, the human cost mounts. To fully grasp that cost, we must turn, finally, to the children who bear it every day of their lives—children like Eric Grant. By the time dangerously high levels of lead were discovered in his blood in 1976, Eric was 5 years old, and the damage to his central nervous system was irreversible. Today he has trouble concentrating on his schoolwork. He is fidgety and nervous, and the slightest noise distracts him. Being black and poor, Eric Grant had two strikes against him; lead poisoning is likely to be strike three. Meanwhile, the Alameda County, California, Lead Screening Project, which found Eric and treated him before his problem got worse, was disbanded because of cuts in Federal funding. Other children growing up in Eric's neighborhood are doomed to repeat the same vicious cycle. □

REPORT FROM GRENADA

# Unlikely Cold War Hot Spot

MICHAEL MASSING

The scenario seems familiar by now. A high-level U.S. official claims ominous developments in a relatively obscure country threaten America's security. In this case, the target is tiny Grenada, which President Reagan blasted in his March 23 Star Wars speech. Following tradition, he displayed the requisite satellite photo—this one showing the runway at Grenada's new airport—as "proof" of the new menace. The airport, the President said, is being built for military purposes as part of a Soviet-Cuban "power projection into the region."

*Michael Massing, former executive editor of* Columbia Journalism Review, *is a writer in New York City.*

Responding immediately, Grenada dispatched Foreign Minister Unison Whiteman to the United States. At press conferences, meetings and interviews in New York and Washington, Whiteman patiently reiterated his government's contention that the airport will be used solely for tourism. He also charged that the United States is training a force to invade the island nation.

To complete the familiar picture, U.S. correspondents scurried down to the Caribbean to see what the fuss was all about. They dutifully reported on the Cuban presence, the Grenadian military and, of course, the notorious runway. In most cases, they showed up the President's remarks for what they were—rhetorical nonsense. Echoes of El Salvador.

But the Grenada story didn't end there. Many reporters became so absorbed in checking runway lengths and counting AK-47s that they failed to probe the broader implications of U.S. policy toward this mite of a nation. If they had, they would have discovered that it has been consistently, and almost comically, inept. In fact, if the State Department were deliberately encouraging Grenada to align itself with the Eastern bloc, it could hardly have done a better job of it.

Relations between Grenada and the United States have been sour since the left-wing New Jewel Movement (N.J.M.) overthrew the despotic and despised Eric Gairy on March 13, 1979. Soon after the coup, the United States warned Prime Minister Maurice Bishop that if Grenada wanted good relations it would have to steer clear of Cuba. Bishop understandably bridled at this demand, declaring that Grenada, and only Grenada, would decide who its friends would be. Washington responded by breaking off talks with the Grenadians about future relations, and it has since rejected repeated requests for a dialogue.

Since taking power, the Bishop government has faced the daunting task of rebuilding an economy that Gairy had plundered for almost three decades. Today, Grenada under the N.J.M. is a classic example of a one-party state intent on development above all else. As a visitor to the island soon learns, this is a country in a hurry. In the tiny, picturesque capital of St. George's, as elsewhere, billboards proclaim in bold black letters "This is where your tax money goes," followed by such no-nonsense descriptions as "Port Expansion: $6,000,000"; "Low-Income Housing: $1.5 Million"; "Netball Mini-Stadium: $215,000." The Grenadian calendar is filled with rallies and ceremonies to inaugurate new schools, repaved roads and community centers.

The government has sought help from all quarters. Bishop is frequently out of the country, visiting some far-off land (most recently, North Korea) in urgent search of aid and technical assistance. Among those generously answering the call have been Venezuela, Canada (which is helping rehabilitate the island's declining cocoa industry) and the European Economic Community (which has backed the airport and other important development projects).

It is the Soviet bloc countries, however, whose aid is most visible. During my visit to Grenada, in March, I attended a rally to inaugurate a new telephone exchange—compliments

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of East Germany, which provided the equipment on highly favorable terms. In another ceremony, held at the port of St. George's, some 200 dockworkers gathered to greet a Soviet ship laden with gifts, including vans, buses and an airplane for crop-dusting. Grenadian officials and union representatives used the occasion to offer encomiums to international fraternalism and the workers of the world. Soviet Ambassador Grenadiy Sashenev hailed the ship as a "manifestation of Soviet solidarity toward the Grenadian revolution and the Grenadian people," and concluded his speech with the cry, "Long live Soviet-Grenadian friendship," which was politely echoed by the assembled workers.

Of all the countries aiding Grenada, none have been as forthcoming as Cuba. It has played a critical role in the construction of the airport, contributing about 40 percent of the facility's $71 million price tag (most of it in the form of manpower and supplies). Its 300 laborers work double shifts, their discipline a source of constant wonder to Grenadians. (On Sundays, the Cubans break for a game of baseball, played on an exquisite diamond built at the airport site.) In conjunction with paving the runway, Cuba dug a quarry, and built Grenada its first rock-crushing plant and its first asphalt-mixing facility—a measure of just how much catching-up this island has to do.

But Cuba's assistance has not been limited to the airport. It is committed to helping the Grenadians in such fields as health, education, transportation, agriculture, fishing, culture and sports. It has provided badly needed medical personnel and is training twenty-five Grenadian doctors in Cuba. It has donated chairs and tables for use in schools. It has even supplied two magicians, who turn up regularly at concerts, rallies and other affairs; though their tricks are rather corny, they delight the Grenadians, an ingenuous people.

The United States, by contrast, has shown Grenada only its ugliest face. Reagan's speech was but one tactic among many in a menacing offensive that seems to have one objective: toppling the Bishop government. The campaign has used propaganda, diplomatic isolation, economic pressure and military intimidation. The Reagan Administration's efforts to "win over" Grenada have included pressuring Western European countries to withhold financial aid for the airport, attempting to block Grenada's application for an International Monetary Fund loan and seeking to make it ineligible to receive funds from the Barbados-based Caribbean Development Bank. In each case, the Administration failed miserably.

I witnessed a vivid example of the contrast between U.S. and Cuban policies at a March 12 rally marking the official opening of a plant to produce prefabricated parts for low-cost housing. The factory was donated by Cuba. At the site, the Grenadian and Cuban flags flew side by side, and among the 1,000 or so people in attendance were more than 100 Cuban workers. Originally scheduled as one in a series of ceremonies to commemorate the March 13 anniversary of Gairy's overthrow, the gathering took on special significance in view of White House warnings that Grenada is a threat to the national security of the United States and of American naval maneuvers concurrently taking place in the Caribbean.

"If we are to believe certain madmen," Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard railed in a forty-five-minute oration, "this tiny island of 110,000 people, twenty-one by thirteen miles, is a superpower. We must be a superpower because the United States, the mightiest power in the world, is trembling at us." Recounting the history of U.S. hostility toward Grenada, he declared: "Within 200 miles of here are over 300 warplanes and battleships, surrounding our country. But we are not afraid. This revolution is not afraid of imperialism. If they come, we will throw them in the sea."

Coard said that the new housing plant offered hope: "In a country with only 20,000 families, a housing plant that can produce 500 houses each year is a giant step forward. In a fairly short period of time, this country will be able to wipe out its housing problem. And for this we must thank the government and people of Cuba." The crowd cheered and chanted anti-imperialist slogans.

It would be wrong to infer that Grenadians are inherently anti-American. In fact, inhabitants of this former British colony are well disposed toward Americans. Almost everyone in Grenada has at least one relative living in the United States, and a large proportion of tourists on the island are Americans.

On the other hand, many locals regard the Cubans, and Castroism, with suspicion. An example: On my way to the airport one hot afternoon, I stopped at a bar for some refreshment and fell into conversation with a group of five Grenadians. Four of them were deeply hostile to the Cuban presence. But, I asked, what about all the good things Cuba had done—the doctors and dentists they had sent to Grenada? "Yes," one of them answered, "they have sent dentists, but if you look closely at the Cubans working here, you'll see they don't have any teeth." An irrational com-

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ment, but it reflects an underlying distrust of the Cubans. Many Grenadians fear that as their country's dependence on Cuba grows, its political system will become increasingly closed—and indeed that is already happening. Grenada has no opposition groups and no independent press, and there is no prospect of elections. It does have scores of political prisoners (though, in one encouraging sign, the government released about 100 at the end of last year).

The World Bank has calculated that as little as $10 million in aid could improve Grenada's growth rate substantially. That would be a trivial price for the United States to pay, especially given the amount of good will it would generate. Instead, the Reagan Administration has expended its energy on a policy of bluster, threat and intimidation—which has helped achieve the opposite of what was intended. □

# Buck's Bucks

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

Many of the people who live in Marin County commute via bridge or ferry to the city on the bay. According to one estimate, the average Marin County home is worth two and a half times the national average.

There are poor people in the county (some of them, including the remnants of the creative colonies that once gave the waterfront village of Sausalito its flavor, are that way by choice). But in a place where public housing projects are described as "California modern," the poor tend to be overlooked.

It is easy to dismiss Buck's legacy as something that could happen only in Marin County, an eminently suitable representative of the stereotypical California—land of hot tubs, encounter groups and sports cars with vanity license plates. But the money is real, the organizations receiving it are real, and the foundation that Buck and her lawyer selected to disburse it is not some bizarre self-improvement cult but an established philanthropic group.

Before Buck's trust fund suddenly increased in value by more than 3,500 percent in 1979, the San Francisco Foundation was a small fund which had contributed to charitable and nonprofit groups in the Bay area for more than three decades—quietly, modestly and with little controversy. In the accounting year that ended last July, the foundation poured $28.8 million into Marin County—more than the Rockefeller Brothers Fund spent in the entire world the previous year.

In her will, Buck stipulated that the income from her $7 million estate be used for "exclusively non-profit charitable, religious or educational purposes in providing care for the needy in Marin County, California, and for other non-profit charitable, religious, or educational purposes in that county." The foundation has stoutly resisted both suggestions and demands from nonprofit groups elsewhere in the Bay area that the language of the will be circumvented because of the large sum of money involved. Robert Harris, a board member, has said, "We feel a deep responsibility for spending Mrs. Buck's money the way she wanted it spent. The lady left it to us." No money will cross the county line, said Harris, until "the day . . . comes that we fill every rut in the roads in Marin County." There are those who think the foundation has been trying to do just that, for want of any better ideas.

The foundation's own explanation of what it hopes to accomplish with the money sounds impressive. The funds will be used in behalf of "intrinsic values which are intended to express long-term and desirable ends for the Bay Area," including strengthening the family, encouraging "a variety of different ages, incomes, ethnicity, lifestyles, and abilities" to flourish, eliminating and controlling "economic, social, or psychological forces which inhibit individual achievement," promoting creativity, recreation and cultural expression, and protecting the environment. One of the factors by which the foundation judges a proposal is whether it "could be replicated in other communities."

In the most recent annual report it filed with the State of California, the foundation claims that some of the recipients of Buck funds have already produced "significant accomplishments." These include an organization that promotes art in public places, an "education task force" that is devising uniform curricula for county high schools, a Nature Conservancy project devoted to educating the public about an undeveloped parcel of land on the county's Pacific side and a community development corporation in Marin City, one of the county's two identifiable centers of poverty. Certainly, in choosing grant recipients the foundation has avoided giving money to the sort of hustlers drawn to large sums of money like flies to honey.

There have been some dubious grants, to be sure—such as the $19,560 awarded to the Sleepy Hollow Home Owners Association, which reported to state tax authorities that its charitable activities consisted largely of "maintaining a clubhouse and pool facilities for use of . . . members and guests." Since the Buck money came to the organization, the only reported change in its activities has been the hiring of a professional swimming coach. Then there was the $61,807 that went to the Novato Ecumenical Housing Association for "supervising," over a ten-month period, the construction of six owner-built town houses that it promoted as exemplars of "self-help" housing.

Despite such obvious waste and foolishness, most of the foundation's activities are routine. It could well be argued that the San Francisco Foundation is doing nothing more or less with Buck's money than the average foundation does with its trove. But a closer look shows that the way the money has been spent has done more harm than good to Marin County.

Because of its size, Buck's fortune has become an intrusive force in Marin County, and the foundation that administers it has become the county's most powerful and

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feared institution. This situation is made worse by the fact that before Buck's legacy, Marin County had little experience with philanthropy.

When the San Francisco Foundation began sharing the Buck wealth, there was certainly no great renaissance of creativity. The main result, rather, was a widespread loss of independence among community organizations. Nonprofit groups that had depended largely on volunteers started competing with one another for the Buck bucks. Gary Giacomini, a member of the county's Board of Supervisors, said the rivalry had become a "mania." "Activists who were loyally tilling the fields for years were writing grant proposals like you pitch spaghetti against a wall," he said. "If one sticks, everybody eats."

There was a significant increase in the number of requests for inflated sums: $24,500 to Youth In Arts to plan a one-week arts festival for children; $21,375 to a private elementary school to buy a van; $329,700 to the Point Reyes Bird Observatory for "planning" and "membership drives"; $26,895 to the Marin Citizens for Energy Planning for a slide show, a brochure and "needs assessment" to determine how to distribute information on conservation. Many proposals were turned down, of course, and because expectations were so high, the subsequent letdown caused considerable outrage.

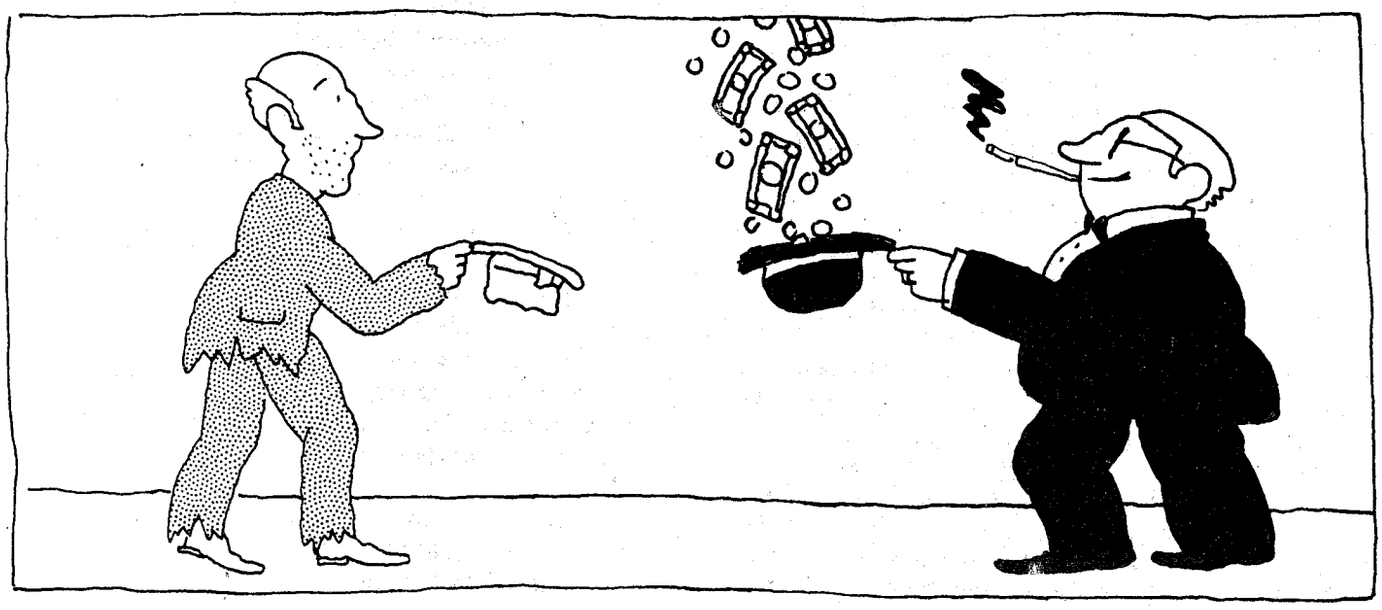
Henry Izumizaki, one of the foundation's program executives, said in an interview that this anger was "a sad, strange phenomenon that can only occur when megabucks raise expectations the way they do in Marin. If we had only a couple million dollars to spend there, we would have a lot more friends in the county." Nevertheless, some good friends *were* made: Playwrights Unlimited, for example, which sponsors playwrights' festivals, saw its gross revenues rise from $321 in 1979 to $113,118 in 1981, of which $30,000 was from the foundation. Some groups were blessed with full funding at birth. Family Connection, a nonprofit group of therapists which offers counseling to families whose adolescent members are having problems, started with $3,950 in 1980, of which $3,800 was Buck money. The following year, when it began providing services, it was awarded $240,600. The group charges its clients a fee.

Organizations that deal with the problems of the poor—of the sort that grew out of the national war on poverty—have been less attractive to the foundation. The San Francisco Foundation's attitude in this regard is not all that different from the attitudes of most foundations. Poverty and philanthropy don't mix. As one Bay area foundation director put it: "Marin is the most blatant example of the rich giving to the rich we have ever seen. Supply has created a demand for the money that has distorted things so much that the foundation is giving to those who specifically do not need it."

Before voicing his opinions, he asked that his name not be used, as did many of the people we talked to in and around Marin County who were connected with government, philanthropy or nonprofit organizations. It is better not to bite the hand that, if it is not feeding you today, may well be feeding you tomorrow.

Such discretion is only one effect of the metamorphosis of the San Francisco Foundation into a social force in Beryl Buck's favorite county. At first, the foundation insisted that it would not become a quasi-governmental body to make up for the public funds and programs that had been reduced in 1978 as a result of the 52 percent cut in Marin County property taxes under Proposition 13. Gradually, however, it began pouring money into areas traditionally reserved for government—the school system, and flood relief in two successive years of destructive storms.

As it moved into those areas, the foundation demanded that the organizations it helped become more businesslike. The county government rarely interfered with the internal policies of the nonprofit organizations it funded. When the foundation started paying the bills, however, it insisted that these groups appoint boards of directors with decision-making power. As the foundation's Robert Harris explained, "I'm not sure Marin is accustomed to the way we do business. There are a lot of places where the staff has been running things their own way for



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years. We've had to tell them to beef up their boards."

The foundation's demands were sometimes bizarre. For example, it forced Marin Abused Women's Services to adopt a $30,000 program to help battering men on the ground that counseling the culprits is more cost-effective than helping their victims. At a meeting with representatives of women's groups, foundation executives referred to the high "recidivism" rate among battered women, as if they were the ones at fault.

To spread Buck's wealth more expeditiously, the foundation formed collateral agencies and minifoundations. The added layers of bureaucracy—consortiums, task forces, planning groups and high-priced consultants—soaked up a lot of money and usually produced timid proposals. The education task force, which the foundation has listed as one of its "significant accomplishments," used its $141,850 grant to draw up a uniform mathematics curriculum for the county's public schools. The task force was made up largely of educators, who continued to draw their salaries, and there is no indication that the new curriculum has made a significant contribution to learning in Marin County.

The foundation insisted, as any corporation would, that groups applying for grants produce credentials. "Development directors" and "staff planners" appeared on the organizational charts of groups that for years had mainly relied on volunteers. "Money," said County Supervisor Al Aramburu, "is subverting the idealism that used to be built into the value of public service."

As a result, the county bureaucracy has virtually been pre-empted by a new one—one which is unresponsive to public opinion. Despite its great political power, the foundation remains adamantly "private." As Harris said, "We don't have to acknowledge public opinion in the sense of a ballot box or protest movement."

In such an atmosphere, many of the projects the San Francisco Foundation supports with Beryl Buck's money are doomed to the mediocrity and semifailure that characterize a lot of philanthropic activism. There appears to be little hope that Buck's legacy will be used for the brilliantly innovative, dramatic undertakings that many within and outside the county had hoped for—a center for environmental research that would address global problems, for example, or a project that would examine prisons and society. (San Quentin can be seen from the county's main north-south freeway, but it is conveniently out of mind for most Marin County residents. An attempt was made to use some of the Buck money to fund a think tank on criminal justice, but it appears to have become a victim of the foundation's own policy and bureaucratic problems, and is now in limbo.)

The San Francisco Foundation's claims of success prove hollow when examined up close. The $30,000 "transportation program" of a giant new community organization that was listed among the "significant accomplishments" consists of a van that makes twice-weekly runs from the community to a shopping center. The community development corporation in Marin City, which was awarded several hundred thousand dollars to increase "economic opportunities for Marin City residents," came up with a plan for a multimillion-dollar resort hotel with space for specialty stores and offices. Marin City's unemployed blacks will presumably have a crack at chambermaid and porter jobs in the hotel. When it is built. Few of the "success stories" are worth trying elsewhere—although no doubt home owners' associations all over the nation would like to convince a foundation to bankroll their children's swimming teams.

The situation cries out for reform, and the logical reformer is the foundation world itself, for what has happened in Marin County is both a reflection of and a reflection on philanthropy as it is currently practiced. The experts in the field should study this microcosm of philanthropy to find out what went wrong and to suggest possible remedies. But given the code of silence which forbids criticizing one's peers and which is as deeply entrenched in the foundation world as it is in the medical and legal professions, such action seems unlikely.

Barring self-reform, the impetus must come from the courts. Already, forty-six agencies and individuals in the Bay area have challenged the foundation's methods of distributing the Buck money. (One of the challengers, Gordon Sherman, a Marin County resident who heads the G.B.S. Foundation, partially funded the research on which this article is based.) A Marin County superior court judge ruled that the objectors had no right to question the foundation's actions; that only the attorney general could do that. The judge's wife, a San Rafael City Council member, was one of the chief negotiators with the San Francisco Foundation for a $500,000 grant for a community center.

Challenged by the forty-six objectors on grounds of the "appearance of impropriety," the judge refused to disqualify himself. At the end of March, the state Court of Appeal found that the judge had erred in ruling on the motion for his own disqualification, and the matter went to another judge for reconsideration.

In another legal challenge, the state attorney general's office, represented by Deputy Attorney General Carole Kornblum, has raised an important question: Since Marin County is so well-off to start with, and since Buck dollars have flowed into it in such quantities, is there now a "saturation of need" there? If so—if the county's needs are more than met and the overflow is so great as to have become harmful—Kornblum argued, the terms of Buck's will should be modified.

The San Francisco Foundation strongly opposes that line of reasoning, of course, and so far has adamantly refused to depart from its literal interpretation of Buck's will. But last January the foundation announced, after meetings with representatives of the attorney general's office, "We are consulting with experts as to whether it is at all feasible to develop a sense of limits to grants-making in Marin." The concept of saturation of need, whether or not it has any legal standing, has become a real-life issue in Marin County, and even the San Francisco Foundation is beginning to grasp that. □

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# BOOKS & THE ARTS.

## Murder Into Myth

RONALD DE FEO

CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD. *By Gabriel García Márquez. Translated by Gregory Rabassa. Knopf. 120 pp. $10.95.*

With its run-on, seemingly free-associative sentences, its constant flow of images and color, Gabriel García Márquez's last novel, *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, was such a dazzling technical achievement that it left the pleasurably exhausted reader wondering what the author would do next. Could he possibly take another stylistic leap forward? For although the book contained all the elements of the author's previous work—the earthy humor, the flights of fantasy and surrealism, the ceaselessly inventive exaggeration, the transformation of story into myth—it still seemed like an advance for García Márquez, a recasting of his usual storytelling methods into a fresh, very ambitious form.

At first, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* may strike admirers of the earlier book as a bit of a disappointment. By comparison, the narrative appears rather conventional, the language spare and restrained. From a stylistic and even structural point of view, the book recalls early García Márquez, particularly the novel *In Evil Hour*, in which (as in *Chronicle*) an entire town and its response to a mysterious event are rendered through shifting perspectives. But as we read on, these initial qualms fade and what promised to be a relatively simple and simply told tale becomes complex, enigmatic and highly suggestive.

Like a number of recent Latin American novels, notably Jorge Ibargüengoitia's *The Dead Girls*, the book is cast as an investigative account of a crime, a piecing together of testimony or, as García Márquez puts it, an attempt "to put the broken mirror of memory back together from so many scattered shards." And like *The Dead Girls*, the story is based on an actual crime that caused a sensation years before. Some thirty years ago in the town of Sucre, Colombia, a man named Miguel Reyes Palencia returned his new bride to her family when he discovered in their wedding bed that she was not a virgin. Upon hearing this shocking news, the girl's brother sought out her alleged lover, one Cayetano Gentile Chimento, and murdered him. García Márquez, who was a good friend of Cayetano Gentile and who apparently knew the other players in the drama, has taken the incident and given it fictional life. He has invented a vivid group of characters who bear little resemblance to their real-life counterparts and has altered the facts to make the case far more dramatic than it actually was. He has, in essence, questioned, reshaped and played with history in such a way that an unusual but decidedly minor event becomes the stuff of myth.

How far García Márquez has departed from the actual incident was noted by Edith Grossman in an article in *Review*, the Latin American literary and arts journal. Miguel Reyes Palencia (who has since fathered twelve children and become an insurance agent) could not be more unlike Bayardo San Román, the exotic and rather strange young groom of the novel. Arriving in town by boat one day, the aloof, mysterious Bayardo carries "some saddlebags decorated with silver that matched the buckle of his belt and the rings on his boots"; he has "the waist of a novice bullfighter, golden eyes, and a skin slowly roasted by saltpeter." Here is a man so confident of his powers that when he first sees his future bride, Angela Vicario, he is too sleepy to take immediate action, but tells his landlady, "When I wake up remind me that I'm going to marry her." The real-life victim has been transformed into Santiago Nasar, a well-liked but rather quirky and comic figure, who pursues his cook's ripe, uncooperative daughter and who, on the day of his death, dresses up "pontifical style" hoping for a chance to kiss the ring of a visiting bishop. The murderer, the brother of the bride, becomes in the novel twin brothers, Pedro and Pablo, somewhat reluctant and nervous killers who, in tracking down Santiago Nasar, alert the entire town to their intentions. Turning the killer into two killers proves to be an inspired touch, for the brothers' conflicting personalities give the drama added tension.

In telling this story, which is as much about the townspeople and their reactions as it is about the key players, García Márquez might simply have remained omniscient, as he did in *In Evil Hour*, mechanically shifting from one citizen to another. Instead, he places himself in the action, assuming the role of a former citizen who returns home to reconstruct the events of the tragic day—a day he himself lived through. He also hopes to understand why so many informed citizens made no real attempt to prevent a death that, in the words of the perplexed investigating magistrate, was "so clearly foretold." This narrative decision adds another layer to the book, for the narrator, who is visible one moment, invisible the next, could very well ask himself the same question he is intent on asking others, and his own role, his own failure to act in the affair contributes to the book's odd, haunting ambiguity. By using a narrator who views the drama in retrospect, García Márquez can plunge into the past and then pull back to the present, revealing the characters as they were, as they would develop and as they are now. For instance, Angela, the bride who becomes so obsessed with her ex-husband that over the years she sends him some 2,000 letters, is seen in the present as an old woman living in an "Indian death village," "a woman half in mourning, with steel-rimmed glasses and yellowish gray hair," "hanging above her head . . . a canary that didn't stop singing."

Although we know the outcome of the story from the very first line and although the story is repeated, fragmented and chronologically jumbled—told as it is from so many different perspectives—the tension never dissipates. García Márquez keeps reminding us that Santiago Nasar is about to die. Those who are recalling the day mention the last moment they saw him alive. The narrator typically introduces an action with an ominous line ("On the day they were going to kill him . . ."). By using this device, the author heightens the action of the moment, makes it appear all the more precious and significant. In effect, all of Santiago's move-

*Ronald De Feo has written reviews and short stories for* The New York Times Book Review, The New Republic, Hudson Review *and many other magazines.*

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ments are final movements. We have here an animated dead man, a mythic figure. Also lifting the story into myth is the repeated use of exaggeration: a wedding, for instance, becomes a legendary event to which "so many gifts were brought that it was necessary to restore the forgotten site of the first electrical power plant in order to display the most valuable among them."

Santiago's murder, the savagery of which is previewed in a grotesque flash-forward of the autopsy, is presented in horrifying detail at the close of the book, and we are surprised that this strangely comic crime can affect us so powerfully and deeply. The question of why no one successfully interceded lingers in the reader's mind. While obedience to an ancient, ritualistic code of honor and a strong belief in *machismo* may be partial answers, García Márquez suggests that mightier forces were at work here, that Santiago was fated to die and that no matter what the narrator or anyone else had done, the result would have been the same. As Pablo Vicario notes at one point, "There's no way out of this. It's as if it had already happened."

I should mention that I first read this novella when it was published in *Vanity Fair* and that the magazine's small type did not do it justice. One needs the book to see how beautifully it is put together, to savor its many brilliant passages and touches and to recognize what an amazing job of compression it is. *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* may not be the book we expected after *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, but in its own way it is just as memorable—if not more so. □

# Dancing as Fast as They Can

LAURA SHAPIRO

OFF BALANCE: The Real World Of Ballet. *By Suzanne Gordon. Pantheon. 216 pp. $15.95.*

Suzanne Gordon spent two years listening to dancers talk not about their art but about their work, and simply to have acknowledged that distinction sets her project in a small, rebellious category of its own on the dance bookshelf. We all know by now that dancers put in long, sweaty hours in the studio, diet constantly and don't get paid much; but we tend to see these as minor, even attractive sacrifices demanded by the nature of the art form and gladly made. Gordon doesn't just admire them as sacrifices, though; she analyzes them as working conditions. Unlike most visitors to the ballet world, she has resisted the temptation to fall in love with dancers' own love of their work; as a result, she has been able to uncover a number of remarkably disagreeable truths about American ballet.

Drawing on interviews and observations she has made in Boston, New York, San Francisco, Houston, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Gordon describes the personal and professional lives of ordinary American dancers, from the start of their training at the age of 8 or 10 until their bodies give out at about 35. Today, she finds, the Sugar Plum Fairy is likely to be a 17-year-old anorexic dancing with a torn ligament, who may never have read a book or visited a museum or had an emotional relationship outside her family, and whose driving obsession is the fear of being replaced. "Dancers begin to live exclusively in the theater because they just don't know what to do with themselves when they have an hour off," Michelle Benash, a former member of the American Ballet Theater, told Gordon. To a certain extent, of course, these deprivations are necessary. Ballet dancers do have to be thin so that they can be fast and flexible and display the choreography; they do need discipline and determination to survive and meet their competition; and injuries are inevitable. Ballet hurts; it always will. But as *Off Balance* makes clear, the teachers, directors, choreographers and company managers who essentially own and operate ballet dancers from childhood until retirement are expecting more and more these days from their human machinery.

Instead of taking enough time off to let a sprain or a fracture heal properly, for example, a company member will "dance through" it, which returns her quickly to the stage and saves the company money, but hastens the deterioration of her body. "They make you feel that you're awful for being injured," says a dancer from Houston. "When you come back from taking time off, they don't pay attention to you." The single-minded intensity of an ambitious dancer makes her an economical employee, for she's quite willing to dispense with a private life and a savings account in order to dance as much as she can before she's too old. Nowadays "old age" may come as early as 30, for current taste favors "baby ballerinas" just as it favors barely pubescent actresses and models. With no more than a high school diploma and no knowledge of anything but ballet, retired dancers are not very employable; and except for a few superstars they certainly aren't rich. Most dancers leave the theater each night with smaller paychecks than the musicians, the directors, the stagehands or just about anyone involved in the ballet except possibly the ushers.

Amid all these pressures, ballet dancers persist and sometimes thrive—and when they crack, they learn to hide it. Dancers who can't live up to their ambitions, who feel swamped by the competition and can't turn any faster or kick any higher no matter how hard they work, increasingly take it out on their bodies. In the most chilling chapter of this book Gordon documents the insane degree of dieting that ballerinas and students, some as young as 10 or 11, impose upon themselves in homage to the pared-down, asexual figure that dominates the esthetic of contemporary ballet. These youngsters are clinically malnourished, which subverts their physical development and makes them even more prone to injuries than they normally would be. Like all anorexics, they're trying to take control of their lives; but while most teen-age anorexics are seen as having a serious problem, until a dancer becomes downright skeletal her starving is applauded.

As Gordon sees it, most of the damaging aspects of a ballet dancer's working life could be remedied by a strong union; and she's encouraged by recent signs that the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA), the dancers' traditionally feeble union, is toughening up. What she doesn't take into consideration, however, is the most powerful argument for the present system: destructive as it may be, the American ballet establishment produces regiment after regiment of splendid dancers. Gordon offers the example of the Swedish

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Ballet to demonstrate how a company can operate on distinctly more humane principles than any American troupe, but in artistic terms the comparison works against her. Nobody, probably not even a Swede, thinks of the Swedish Ballet when the subject of great dancing comes up—the troupe that sets the standard for the world is the New York City Ballet.

Nonetheless, it's hard to believe that dancers have to be malnourished, nervous, poorly educated and badly paid in order to become brilliant performers. On the contrary, it seems likely that healthy dancers, who understand something of the world and themselves and who know their work is valued, would dance both better and longer. Nobody claims that symphony musicians, for example, would play better if they were kept in a state of perpetual anxiety about their work. Nor is it permissible any longer to skimp on musicians' salaries—their union is legendary. Among performing artists it's only ballet dancers whose productivity is supposed to be based on fever and desperation alone. And yet I doubt that a union could bring the working conditions of American dancers up to the level of their artistry, at least with the speed and efficiency of the musicians' union. Ballet is different, and I think Gordon underestimates that difference. Ballet is women's work.

Gordon emphasizes the growing number of men in American ballet, and it's true that the male presence is more visible and acceptable now than it was ten or twenty years ago; but ballet is still widely regarded as a pretty pastime for women and homosexuals, not as a serious career worthy of a real man. Like nursing and teaching and social work—other "female" professions—ballet is considered women's work no matter who does it; and it's underpaid and undervalued accordingly. Just as in other female professions, moreover, the most noticeable change brought about by the increased number of men is that the leadership has become overwhelmingly male, while the ranks remain largely female. When their performing careers are over, the most talented male dancers are hired as artistic directors or encouraged to choreograph; the most talented women look for teaching jobs.

"You're there to dance, not to think or suggest, but to focus," points out a former dancer; and this professional indoctrination starts in childhood. It's an axiom of the art that ballet is not a democracy, that dancers shouldn't try to use their minds for anything except following orders, and that artistic directors and choreographers must be able to depend upon a speedy, uniform response from their dancers in order to make ballets. Lincoln Kirstein compares the School of American Ballet, which trains dancers for the New York City Ballet, to West Point; he's right, except West Point is probably easier. Yet I rather like the idea of a soldier with a mind of his own, and I suspect that ballet dancers would continue to keep time just fine if they were trained in self-respect as well as stamina. As it stands, however, the system that trains and employs ballet dancers is virtually a model for creating an obedient, grateful work force. I'm not sure ballet dancers can change their self-images by signing union cards.

*Off Balance* opens up an important discussion, and one that a lot of dance lovers are bound to find annoying. The question it raises—what would happen if ballet dancers were to think of themselves as people?—has little to do with the way we're accustomed to talk about art, but its very impertinence is enlightening. By insisting on the dailiness of our most otherworldly art form, Gordon suggests that even ballet can withstand the onset of real life, and that even ballet deserves a feistier response than worship from its devotees. □

# O.K., Parp, Pabst and Putz

GARY GIDDINS

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY: Volume 3, O-SCZ. *Edited by R.W. Burchfield. Oxford University Press. 1,579 pp. $125.*

When the first volume (*A-G*) of *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* appeared in 1972 (at a mere $50), a second volume (*H-P*) was projected for 1975 and a third (*Q-Z*) for 1978. The enterprise's redoubtable editor, R.W. Burchfield, had originally estimated that 50,000 main entries would suffice to bring the most ambitious lexicographical venture in the English language up to date. (The O.E.D. was born in twelve volumes between 1884 and 1928, with a *Supplement & Bibliography* added in 1933; the entire monument to harmless drudgery was compressed into two volumes of microprint—magnifying glass included—in 1971.) But with approximately 450 new words cropping up each year and many more alterations taking place in old words, Burchfield's index cards proliferated beyond all expectations. The second volume (at $60), though only a year late, ended at N. The present volume, its price a sobering comment on inflation, concludes with "Scythism" (a Russian literary movement, post-1917, that "favoured the peasant values of Asiatic Russia"). A fourth and final tome, expected in 1985, will bring the number of main entries to nearly 70,000. Taken together, the four volumes will replace only that original appendix, which will, in Burchfield's words, "descend, along with other rarely consulted works, into the vaults of the larger libraries."

Mock the unwieldiness and expense of the O.E.D. if you like, but for many of us it is a narcotic—indispensable and numbing, a way of life. Plodding in the footsteps of Samuel Johnson, it traces the history of language through choice literary quotations (142,500 in *O-SCZ* alone). Burchfield, a true populist, has little use for the current tribe of Mrs. Grundys who supplement their incomes with fierce jeremiads against the misuse of "hopefully." Open the O.E.D. to any page and you are afloat in an ocean of linguistic movement: words are altered, worn away and reborn; usages drift from the incisive to the idiosyncratic; jargon, slang and foreign phrases are sucked into the tides. Burchfield's democratic values are matched by his dryly observant sense of humor, and *O-SCZ* exceeds even its predecessors in achieving a nearly delirious comprehensiveness. For example, on page 4 we find "ob," as in "He said de Queen ob Sheba wab a dark lady, may be bery dark." This sent me back to *A-G* for "bery," but with no luck. I did find "gwine," however, as in "I gwine to hebbin." But no "hebbin."

In its refusal to shy away from obscenities, the O.E.D. supplement is fully a product of the 1970s. The letter P, as it happens, does justice to the genitals of both sexes, while insuring immortality for that paragon of linguistic preci-

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sion, Judith Krantz, as well as for Strachey, Joyce, Miller and Mailer. Interestingly, Mailer's odd use of "fug" throughout *The Naked and the Dead* did not get into the earlier volume, but then Burchfield seems to demand that more than one writer use a term before it can be included. Thus, Enid Blyton wrote in 1951, "Noddy had a good little hooter on his car. When he pressed it it said 'Pip-Pip,' and sometimes 'Poop-Poop,' and sometimes 'Parp-Parp.' " The O.E.D. defines only "parp" as the honking noise made by a car horn because at least two subsequent novelists (S. Challis and M. Amis) also made their car horns parp. On the other hand, I innocently consulted the entry for "poker" to find "Add: 6. b. = FUCKER, *slang*," the sole justification being that an 1879 edition of *Pearl* published the Nashian couplet "I've been told by jokers That the ladies do all agree that he's the prince of pokers." Definition 6 of the original Victorian O.E.D. would commit itself no further than "A person who pokes; *esp.* one who pokes or pries into things."

*Volume 3* is loaded with definitions for objects, myths, rituals and even grammatical rules taken from such unlikely sources as Mongolian, Japanese and Choctaw. All it takes is a couple of English-speaking writers using one of these terms to make it fit to print in the O.E.D. So the next time you come across "osaekomi waza," just turn to page 123 of *O-SCZ*; never mind that all five examples of usage come from manuals of Judo. Yet no foreign language has been assimilated with greater *joie de vivre* than Yiddish, the true Esperanto of the age. In *O-SCZ* you'll find "schlemazl," "schlemiel," "schlep," "schlock," "schlub," "schmaltz," "schmatte," "schmeer," "schmegeggy," "schmendrik," "schmutz" and many more, including "putz."

It turns out, however, that in Pennsylvania Dutch homes "putz" has a different meaning than in the home of, say, Philip Roth, who is included under definition 2, *slang* with a line from *Portnoy's Complaint*: "He simply cannot—will not—control the fires in his putz." Among the Pennsylvania Dutch, a putz is a representation of the Nativity. Burchfield's mischievous minions have come up with these two examples of usage: in 1902, *The New York Times Magazine* stated, "Only the chosen few can afford to have a really impressive 'putz' which fills half a room, and represents a landscape in miniature. . . . This more elaborate 'putz' requires not only money for its erection, but artistic handiwork"; in 1938, one A. Hark wrote, "Everybody's curious to see what kind of putz everybody else has this year, so they go around visiting." Useful information for New Yorkers headed west.

*O-SCZ* is full of useful information, including major disquisitions on "oil," "old," "rock and roll" and "O.K." Burchfield is quite firm about "O.K.," whose origins have been a subject of endless debate: "It seems clear that *O.K.* first appeared as a jocular alteration of the initial letters of *all correct* (i.e., orl korrect) in 1839, and that in 1840 it was used as an election slogan for 'Old Kinderhook' (see sense A b) Thence by stages it made its way into general use. Other suggestions, e.g. that *O.K.* represents the Choctaw *oke it is*, or French *au quai*, or that it derives from a word in the West African language Wolof via slaves in the Southern States of America, all lack any form of acceptable documentation."

The phrase "oh, oh" dates back at least as far as 1944, when Della Street said it "under her breath" to Perry Mason. T.S. Eliot may have put "objective correlative" on the map in 1919, but the O.E.D. editors found a related usage in 1850, which they tactfully and uncharacteristically set off in parentheses. The earliest use of "psychedelic" appeared in a letter written by Aldous Huxley in 1956. Huxley's letters, first published in 1969, have been a frequent resource for Burchfield and company; for "object of virtu," a letter Huxley wrote his father at 19 was the only example they could find until S. J. Perelman resurrected it in 1970, perhaps after reading the letters himself. Countless words from such specialized areas as psychology and computerese are included, but then as early as 1927 (see "psychopath") *The New Republic* informed its readers that "terms not so long ago confined to specialists are handled familiarly by the laity: moron, inferiority complex, mental age. . . ."

People and products have become adjectives and nouns—for example, "Orwellian" (Orwell is also represented by "oldspeak" and "newspeak"), "Rooseveltian" and "Schoenbergian," not to mention "pablum" and "Pabst." Don't go searching for "Bud," though; when it comes to beer, it seems that only Pabst has literary clout. Some words have been included not because they emerged in modern times, but because their American usage was overlooked in the Anglicism that dominated the original edition of the O.E.D. Thus "obey" is included because R.H. Dana and Herman Melville used it as a nautical term (wrote Melville, "The motto is, 'Obey orders, though you break owners!' "). "Pizza" was first sighted in 1935, and in 1957 it inspired Ogden Nash to write, "She eatsa Pizza! Greedy Mitzi! She no longer itsy-bitsy!" "Pacifism" (the word not the concept) was the most lasting result of the 10th Universal Peace Congress, in 1902, though all the examples of its usage are pugnacious. (The *National Review* opined in 1915, "The greatest war in history is now being fought in the cause of Pacifism.")

Have you noticed that in the last couple of years haberdashers have taken to calling a pair of pants a pant? A.L. Hench registered the same complaint in 1936, yet H.A. Shands observed this peculiarity in Mississippi as early as 1893. It is universally agreed, however, that if you aren't wearing any pants, you are "pantless," which in 1845 was perhaps a more agreeable state of affairs than wearing a pant and enduring the indignity of having it, or them, referred to as "panties." And what are we to make of the fact that "obscene," meaning "offensive to the senses" (as opposed to "offensive to modesty or decency"), was considered "somewhat archaic" in 1933, yet it is "now restored to general use," as in, "Viet Nam was the most obscene episode of the century"? Similarly, "obsolete" was a rare verb at the turn of the century, whereas now it is *orl korrect* to say "only part of the earlier news had been obsoleted."

The O.E.D., as demonstrated, is not entirely consistent; nor is it completely trustworthy. The examples of "obbligato" should have included a reference from jazz criticism, since the term is used quite differently in jazz than in European music; the entry for "Obie" (as in Obie Awards) begins with a 1967 reference in the *National Observer* but never traces its origin to *The Village Voice*; Ayn Rand enthusiasts, if any there still be, will be saddened to learn she has no place in the history of "objectivism." What's more, the fervent activity of the language undermines the O.E.D.'s equally fervent attempt at contemporaneity. You will find "flopsy bunny" but not "floppy disc," "gentle-

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womanliness" but not "gentrification," "G-string" but not "G-spot," "red spot" but not "redstockings," "pachuco" but not "Pac Man." Language marches on; the Oxford English Dictionary cleans up after it. □

# Four Voices for Silence

## CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

ETRUSCAN THINGS. *By Rika Lesser. Braziller. 87 pp. $10.95. Paper $4.95.*

THE WHITE WORDS. *By Baron Wormser. Houghton Mifflin. 64 pp. $12.95. Paper $6.95.*

PRESENCE. *By Alan Williamson. Knopf. 82 pp. $11.95. Paper $6.95.*

JURGIS PETRASKAS. *By Anthony Petrosky. Louisiana State University Press. 72 pp. $12.95. Paper $5.95.*

*My child won't stir,*
*stares up at me all*
*supplication. Arms*
*close to his sides, knees*
*bent, his tiny feet rest*
*on an arm of this*
*chair. Swaddled in cloth*
*not thick enough to*
*warm, perhaps he sleeps.*
*. . . My eyes*
*are open, fix on empty*
*space. They cannot see*
*his smile of trust. Still,*
*we are one, this knowledge*
*surges through the stone.*
*("Woman From Chianciano")*

The woman is an Etruscan thing. One does not have to be told that she is some sort of funerary sculpture, although it is interesting to learn that her head is a lid, and that inside were found a child's bones and ashes, and a gold fibula. I read Rika Lesser's *Etruscan Things* through before I remembered there were notes; interesting they certainly were, and they carried me through a second reading more knowingly. But it was a minor kind of knowing compared to that already surging through the poems: how sure a metaphor stone is for death. But everything is a metaphor for death when each thing, and all our knowledge of it, must come from opened graves. "Cloth not thick enough to warm." Indeed.

*Clara Claiborne Park is the author of* The Siege: The First Eight Years of an Autistic Child *(Atlantic-Little, Brown). She writes frequently for* Commonweal, Hudson Review *and* The American Scholar.

"La Defunta" describes a red-painted tomb chamber, within it a frieze of obscure figures. Is it Ceres, Persephone or Cybele "veiled and crowned," whose "contours/melt into the stone wall's ground, as if/in a cloud"? No matter which, and how can we expect to see such a one clearly? A father approaches, offering her wine, his arm around his son, who is playing a double flute. She listens, tells the boy she has come to offer "life of a different kind." But by the time Lesser has ended the poem we have been made ready to guess what drink it is the goddess has for him.

Death, mysterious objects, gods and a language we cannot know. *Male ceia hia etnam.* In a museum in Zagreb the mummy of a girl, "dishoused, stripped/ and catalogued," is exposed in a glass case, her grave wrappings, covered with writing, removed for separate display:

The iron rod eats into what little
flesh I have left. And I'm cold.
("The Mummy Speaks")

She asks a question of all scholars: "Have they considered that without me/the text has no meaning?"

Things buried with the dead bear witness to life. The Etruscans gave useful objects handles in human shapes—a girl's body shaped to the hand, a warrior, a dancer. They too speak:

Broken off from our objects
we wrestle, offer
libations, perform
acrobatics . . .
("A Handle on Things")

The coming together of death, life and the unknown fashions the slow sense of the sacred, even when the gods are dead. Heavy with inaccessible meanings, these fragments call out, "*Touch us. Hold us. Keep us.*/What we were attached to/lost long ago." Leafing through art books, dragging through museums, not many of us hear that appeal. This small book opens our ears.

Baron Wormser too is respectful of life. In "Passing Significance," the first poem of *The White Words*,

"No one of importance here," the
chief assessor

PULPSMITH
*is out to get you . . .*
*but you can't escape*
*great ideas –*
Naive Wave
Borges Cracks Kipling
MIT Prof: Stop Science!
Farrell on One-Nite Stands
Lite Verse "Armourized"
Assassination Fixation
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Mutters as he stamps the snow off
his boots
And looks around at his fellow
travelers
In the sitting room of an inn
That is the only inn thereabouts.

The chief assessor demands more than the passing significance which for Wormser is the supreme meaning of these ordinary lives: "There are names for everyone, for every day/ . . . There is a book somewhere./In it are names, as beautiful as they are obscure." Wormser likes small towns (the dust jacket tells us he lives in one). They "dignify the slimmest/of lives with a history, remembering even dogs/with an earnest pleasure, a rush of anecdote and regret."

In "Letter from New England," he evokes a winter funeral; when a cardinal perches on a limb above the minister's head, then flies away, Wormser refuses to take it for an emblem:

For me,
The boosting of the image has always
signaled
A grasping, expedient wit.

That grasping expedience, that itch to control, is perhaps one with the mind of the assessor—with the dynamism of efficiency Wormser rejects in the concluding poems, where the world may be seen as "a zeppelin ripped and plummeting,/All the industrious captains staring out/The widening portholes." But though he rejects emblems, he is near enough to Frost to find a stabilizing if passing significance in beech leaves, an iris's "poise of blossom," a cord of birch. He can rhyme if he likes, though he has canny ways of obscuring the fact; he can, as a tribute, assume Louise Bogan's formal and subtle voice; he even tosses off a villanelle, running the stanzas together so it won't be obvious. No imagist, he's good at rendering abstract formulations so exact as to be poetic. Coming from Lesser's undiscursive affirmation by object, one notices this other way of seeing.

Like hers, Wormser's is a first book of poetry, and its wide range contrasts sharply with the burrowing intensity of her single subject: the poems take us into a genre painter's studio, evoke Henry James, offer a history of photography, report on the Victorians, even defend rhetoric against today's "determined spontaneity,/The mind hitting out like a fist." But rhetoric will be back, he thinks, "I needn't worry."

Throngs will cheer. Impulse
Must be built upon if it is to last.

Unreconstructed however we are deconstructed, we can be glad that some poets still think poetry's about that.

Most often, though, it is the passing significance of ordinary people that Wormser tries to render permanent: a soldier on a one-day pass, the frustrations of a small-town piano teacher, a blind man and his wife—his hands "what she loves most . . . /. . . soft, and at once tentative and sure."

Alan Williamson's range, too, is wide in his first collection: poems about Van Gogh, Matisse, a striking biographical evocation of the young Mallarmé. His thrust, too, is back to people who, if not ordinary in any small-town sense, are intimately known. There is unfinished business with fathers, mothers, grandparents, with friends and lovers out of the past. Father wrote on Donne and Dryden, asked that the only music at his funeral be Satie's "Trois Gymnopédies"; his son gives that title to his own memorial music. On Mother's side there were grand French relatives, an elopement, "a story that goes as many ways/as the cobwebs in the corner." The young don't want to hear about all that. "Before you have pubic hair you see the gown/Grandmaman is willing to your bride." The young want the story to be over, and they have "intangible allies; the senses/waiting to blossom like deep horns into the skull." They want their own poem to begin, a poem "that goes nowhere, but only deepens and glows." Only later will the son and grandson feel the memorial imperative to "imagine what is nowhere now . . . make/the black dots of the photo flush with dots of rose."

Anthony Petrosky won the Walt Whitman Award for a different kind of poetry about a different kind of people, yet he is doing something of the same work as he writes of his grandfather Jurgis Petraskas, who organized the first miners' strike in Exeter, Pennsylvania, and of other Lithuanian immigrants who lived hard and managed to survive. The grandson, Antanas Petraskas no longer, is not a Lithuanian miner but an American poet; like Williamson he returns to offer his past another kind of survival:

They're there
in Exeter, Pennsylvania, counting,
chanting in Lithuanian
the names of mines and mills with

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the same slow song
that seeps through the dark tunnels.
So this is the way silent things speak.
("Photograph")

A voice for silence. Like the Etruscan funerary receptacle, all these poems do the poet's work of securing, holding, keeping. Lesser's vanished Etruscan holds her child in her arms, the relation unshakable as stone. Wormser, Williamson, Petrosky write poems about their own small children; all three place those poems near the end of their books, giving them a special weight. They seem to need the children as much as the children need them. Petrosky listens to his son's heart. Wormser, trying too soon to teach his little daughter caution, discovers something simple, that she is happy: "I pick at that commonly discredited fact." He dances with her "to a music beyond misgiving." Williamson, thinking his wife pregnant, dreams they have boarded a train they will be on forever and wakes up "feeling I have been in heaven"; the last poem is for his daughter, Elizabeth. Indeed we need the children, and for the old stone reasons; they are the only forever train there is.

Much more, of course, could be said about each of these collections. Readers do not ordinarily worry about the configurations made by the adventitious associations of books arriving together for review. They should know, however, that these exist. It's not quite fair; the Etruscans have pulled three resilient, contemporary consciousnesses into their vortex, a testimony to their strength. What they teach us, however, is only what we know: that in the midst of death we are in life. All these poets say that. □

# W. H. Auden: Two Views

JEFFREY MEYERS

AUDEN: An American Friendship. *By Charles Miller. Charles Scribner's Sons. 180 pp. $14.95.*

AUDEN: A Carnival of Intellect. *By Edward Callan. Oxford University Press. 299 pp. $25.*

Charles Miller lacks the qualities essential to the memoir writer: the self-effacement, objectivity and perception that characterize Joe Ackerley on Forster, Leonard on Virginia Woolf, Jessie Chambers on D. H. Lawrence. He lived with Auden as cook and companion in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1941, although he seems to have been more a servant than a friend. He is uneasy about his status and integrity ("What was Wystan getting out of our friendship?") and insists that their relationship was nonsexual. Yet, he tells us, Auden was lonely and "feeling queer" when he insisted that Miller be his housemate. When Miller moved out to work on a farm during the war, Chester Kallman, a gourmet cook who aroused Miller's jealousy and spite (he is described as "a balding, scar-faced, and toad-plump man"), immediately took his place.

The 34-year-old Auden's relatively successful year at the University of Michigan provides a useful contrast to the received image of the shuffling, prematurely aged poet with crushed-heel slippers and wet wedding-cake face. The poet's love of adolescent clowning, limericks, puns, sentimental songs and Firbankian fiction spilled over into the classroom. He was flippant about Shakespeare but shrewdly recommended Wyndham Lewis's *The Lion and the Fox*. Though Miller sat at Auden's feet, he muddles the titles of Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral* and Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, and rouses rather than slakes our curiosity. Auden's teaching remains almost as vague as the youthful pedagogy of Eliot, Orwell and Waugh.

Miller's intrusive personality ("my grant helped Lynn and me hitch onward into our adventure-filled future") and protracted literary failure ("my poetic novel, *Bricklayer*, lay abandoned") are not interesting. He is the master of trivial rather than telling detail, and his rambling recollections are condescending about Auden's appalling untidiness. Some familiar dicta, exalted and earthy, are recorded: "Poetic form is a challenge to prove that what the poet says is not an accident"; Tom Eliot "enjoys scatological humor." But this book, with its ugly binding and fuzzy photos,

*Jeffrey Meyers, author of biographies of Katherine Mansfield and Wyndham Lewis, is now writing the life of Hemingway.*


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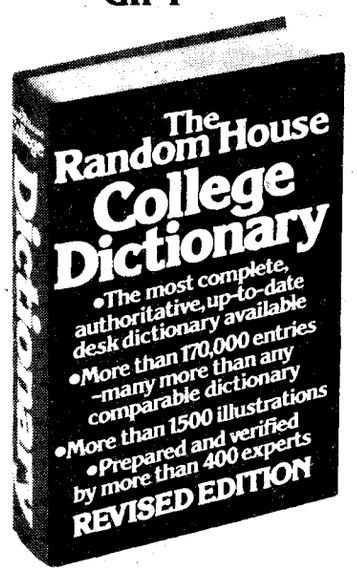
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adds almost nothing to our understanding of Auden and gives the curious effect of looking up someone's nostrils from below.

By contrast, Edward Callan—whose title emphasizes Auden's attempt to unify body and mind—presents a lucid and convincing reading of the difficult youthful poetry and the philosophical themes of the later work. Callan maintains a fine balance between enthusiasm and sound judgment, and gains considerable insight from his personal exploration of Auden's landscapes in England and Italy. But Callan remains surprisingly uncritical of Auden's cruelly misconceived "Miss Gee" (whose spinster heroine's innocent repression is punished by cancer) and of his crackbrained influences: the psychoanalyst Georg Groddeck, Gerald Heard, Homer Lane and John Layard, author of *The Homosexuality of Ghosts and Epileptics*. Though Auden playfully mocked Groddeck's concept of the "It" in a self-descriptive couplet ("I can't think what my It had on It's mind,/To give me flat feet and a big behind"), he never asked of himself, as he had asked of Yeats, "How on earth, we wonder, could a man of his gifts take such nonsense seriously?"

Callan persuasively argues that we should not read Auden, who soon surpassed his peers, as part of what Roy Campbell called the "Macspaunday Group": MacNeice, Spender, Day Lewis. Instead, he draws a suggestive comparison between the artistic accomplishments of Auden and Pope. Both were representative of their age, anxious and Augustan; both were skilled technical craftsmen and gifted satirists; both were estranged from normal life by psychological and physical "wounds." Auden's quintessential characteristics—the clinical air, clipped phrasing, sharp ironic eye and fine control of line and rhythm—are very like Pope's. (His challenging openings, however—"Out on the lawn I lie in bed,/Vega conspicuous overhead"—resemble the stunning rhetoric of his contemporary, George Orwell.)

In the 1930s Auden (in Joyce's words) was "jung and easily freudened"; and like Joyce he sometimes accepted a fortuitous rather than a formulated phrase. As he told Christopher Isherwood in *Letters from Iceland*: "I did not write 'the ports have names for the sea' but 'the poets have names for the sea.' However, as so often before, the mistake seemed better than the original idea."

Callan observes, "The prevailing metaphor in Auden's early poetry is the malaise of man endowed with consciousness and at odds with his instinctive nature." Auden's poetic "frontiers" separate aspects of the psyche as well as allegorical landscapes reflecting both inner estrangement and public disorder: "A million eyes, a million boots in line,/Without expression, waiting for a sign." Auden's memorial to Yeats stresses the need to reconcile human intellect and feeling as the world is pushed to the brink of war. He believed that the awareness of individual consciousness would illuminate the human condition. For this reason, Auden chose as his mentor William Blake, who rejected rationalism and

> Broke off relations in a curse
> With the Newtonian Universe . . .
> And heard inside each mortal thing
> Its holy emanation sing.

Callan cautiously refrains from the definitive choice of best poems that Randall Jarrell liked to make. I believe that Auden achieved his finest poetry after he had abandoned the private obscurity of his early work and before his decline into religious ruminations after he moved to America in 1939. In the late 1930s he wrote "Musée des Beaux Arts"; poems on artists and the artistic vocation—on Rembrandt, Pascal, Voltaire, Melville, Matthew Arnold, Edward Lear, Henry James, A. E. Housman; the brilliantly funny "Letter to Lord Byron"; the magnificent elegies on Ernst Toller, Yeats and Freud; and the two celebrated (and unjustly repudiated) political poems, "Spain" and "September 1, 1939"—which was influenced by Yeats's "Easter 1916." It is a great pity that he did not attempt to match the last two poems with others about his experience with bombed cities and extermination camps in Germany in 1945.

The Christian humility of Auden's religious verse—tepidly inspired by the Protestant theologians Kierkegaard, Tillich and Niebuhr—toned down the heroic aspects of his poetry and made it more ponderous. Callan does not mention that during Auden's period of heightened spirituality and Christian resurgence in the 1940s, he paradoxically had two Jewish lovers—Chester Kallman and Rhoda Jaffe.

Despite his noticeable decline, Auden wrote at least two late masterpieces: the Horatian "In Praise of Limestone," about affinities with a landscape that accommodates human change and self-awareness, and the Goethean "Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno," a farewell to Ischia informed by acute cultural criticism. Auden was a fine literary critic and travel writer. But his breadth of interests (science, music, philosophy, politics), his consummate virtuosity (complex verse forms and patterns of rhyme within and across lines), his intelligence and wit, and his infinite suggestiveness (like "the murmur of underground streams") are exemplified in the late, magisterial "Nocturne" and unequalled by any poet in this century:

> Appearing unannounced, the moon
> Avoids a mountain's jagged prongs

THE ILLUSIONIST

He had lifted women, helplessly floating,
So many times in his imagination,
He finally gave in to that illusion
And rigged invisible wires and a clever bed
And made it all come true by pretending

(Onstage, to music) to treat his charmed assistant
Lightly, to raise her slowly to midair
Asleep under a sheet like an easy dreamer,
To have her glide his way obediently
And gently, an apparition dead to the world.

But all the while, he knew what the audience
Could only wonder at: her empty form
Under that shroud, sustained by an imitation
Of power in his hands now trembling and powerless
To lift more than themselves at the close of the curtain.

*David Wagoner*

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And sweeps into the open sky
Like one who knows where she belongs. □

# FILMS.

ROBERT HATCH

**The Flight of the Eagle**
**Invitation au Voyage**
**Exposed**

In 1897, Salomon August Andrée and two companions took off from Spitzbergen in a hydrogen-filled balloon, intending to plant the Swedish flag at the North Pole. After drifting aimlessly for three days, the balloon dropped to the frozen sea, hundreds of miles from the nearest habitation. The men set off on foot, trekking to the east across the tumultuous and treacherous ice that was moving steadily to the west. In 1930, their bodies, together with their notes and a photographic record of their struggle, were discovered by a Norwegian vessel.

This desperate adventure has become the basis for *The Flight of the Eagle*, by Swedish director Jan Troell, who drew much of the detail from a historical novel by Per Olof Sundman. The film is constructed in three parts: the year of preparation (an earlier attempt had been aborted by unfavorable winds) takes up an hour of screen time; the flight itself lasts only ten minutes; the doomed race for survival occupies the final hour. Part I, a luxurious and meticulously detailed costume drama, whose reproductions of early scientific technology have the fascination of an exhibit at the Smithsonian, gives us the three adventurers' backgrounds. Part III is a physically and psychologically harrowing account of how men of diverse moral fiber conduct themselves in a situation of extreme stress.

The focus throughout is on the character of Andrée, an impressive, authoritative figure whose gift for leadership masks an irrational passion for fame. A glutton, he is driven as well by a hunger for immortality. Thus he pretends to a knowledge of aeronautics that he lacks and scoffs at warnings that his balloon cannot carry out its mission. His obsessive drive reminded me of Klaus Kinski's mad conquistador in Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*. In the moments before the Eagle is cut free of its restraints, to rise like a fabulous dome out of its gigantic housing, it


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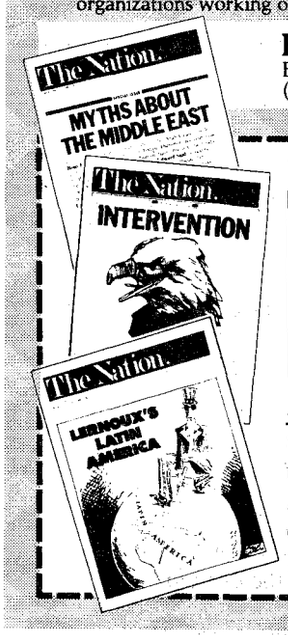


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came to me that Andrée knew the flight would fail, but like a man who has drawn a crowd by climbing out on the ledge of a high building, he could not face the humiliation of failing to leap. Max von Sydow as Andrée is appallingly convincing. He gives us the portrait of a man destroyed by a delusion of grandeur so well maintained that two other men die of their faith in him.

They were Nils Strindberg (Goran Stangertz), a sweet-tempered young scientist with the cadet personality that attaches itself to a stronger ego, and Knut Fraenkel (Sverre Anker Ousdal), a footloose engineer who impulsively joined the expedition when a more prudent man withdrew at the last moment. During the weeks of torment on the ice, Andrée's companions take his measure, but partly because their plight demands solidarity and partly because they possess a humanity he lacks, they do not withdraw their affection though their trust is gone. *The Flight of the Eagle* is more than a brilliantly realized spectacle; it is a tragedy in the full meaning of the word.

The title of Peter del Monte's *Invitation au Voyage* is a reference to Baudelaire, and James Toback, who wrote, directed and produced *Exposed*, appears briefly in the film to celebrate the ecstasy and fatal consequences of Goethe's conception of romantic love. On the evidence of both films I conclude that when a modern director takes the bit of romance in his teeth, we are in for a lushly colorful but somewhat disconcerting ride.

Del Monte's picture, from the novel *Moi, Ma Soeur*, by Jean Bany, concerns Jeanne and Lucien, a pair of beautiful twins who have also been lovers since childhood. They are country bred, but Jeanne (Nina Scott) has become a successful rock singer and Lucien (Laurent Malet) quits his job on a horse farm to join her on tour. Their reunion is warm but brief, for Jeanne dies in a milk bath when an overhead lighting fixture falls into the tub. The grief-stricken Lucien sleeps the night with the corpse and in the morning stows it in a bass-fiddle case that is conveniently at hand, straps the container to the top of his car and departs on a meandering journey along the national highways of France.

Most of the young man's driving is at night and most of the nights are rainy, circumstances which offer opportunities for photography of a dreamlike quality excellently caught by the cinematographer, Bruno Nuytten. In his wanderings, Lucien has brief encounters with several other piquant victims of passion and shows himself a charming, generous recipient of their histories. But all the while he is brooding on the fulfillment of a vow: Shortly before her electrocution Jeanne had asked, "If I die, what will you do?" He had answered, "Make you live again."

At length, finding himself in a port city, he hauls the fiddle case to the top of a high dune, implants it in the sand and sets it afire. He then puts on Jeanne's clothes and lipstick and takes passage on a cargo ship bound for far shores. Mission completed. *Invitation au Voyage* is a work of chic morbidity that depends for its success on the fragile supposition that no one in the audience will laugh.

The ecstasy and its fatal consequences that preoccupy Toback in *Exposed* befall Elizabeth Carlson (Nastassia Kinski), a Midwest college girl who finds the environments of campus and the family farm too confined for her aspiring wings. She flies off to New York City, is mugged on arrival, lands a job as a waitress, attracts the attention of a fashion photographer and in a wink becomes a celebrated model. This dizzying ascent disorients the inexperienced Elizabeth, and she is further confused by the attentions of a handsome, if haggard violinist (Rudolf Nureyev), who ingratiates himself by repeatedly leaping at her from around corners and out of doorways. This unusual courtship is consummated when he concludes a Bach solo by drawing his bow slowly and sensuously across her shoulders, arms and responsive bosom.

Now possessed of a love that passes understanding, she follows him to Paris, where it turns out that her fiddler is also an antiterrorist dedicated to exterminating a blood-intoxicated killer played by Harvey Keitel (and what is an actor of his prowess doing in this farrago?). The idea is to lure the monster from his lair, using Elizabeth as bait. She eagerly complies and the result is sanguinary. Toback has stated, "*Exposed* is about people who have used up all their illusions . . . [and] have to learn that only obsession can keep them alive." In other hands this might have been a promising thriller, but it was spoiled by a writer/director who can't distinguish romance from nonsense. □

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1961

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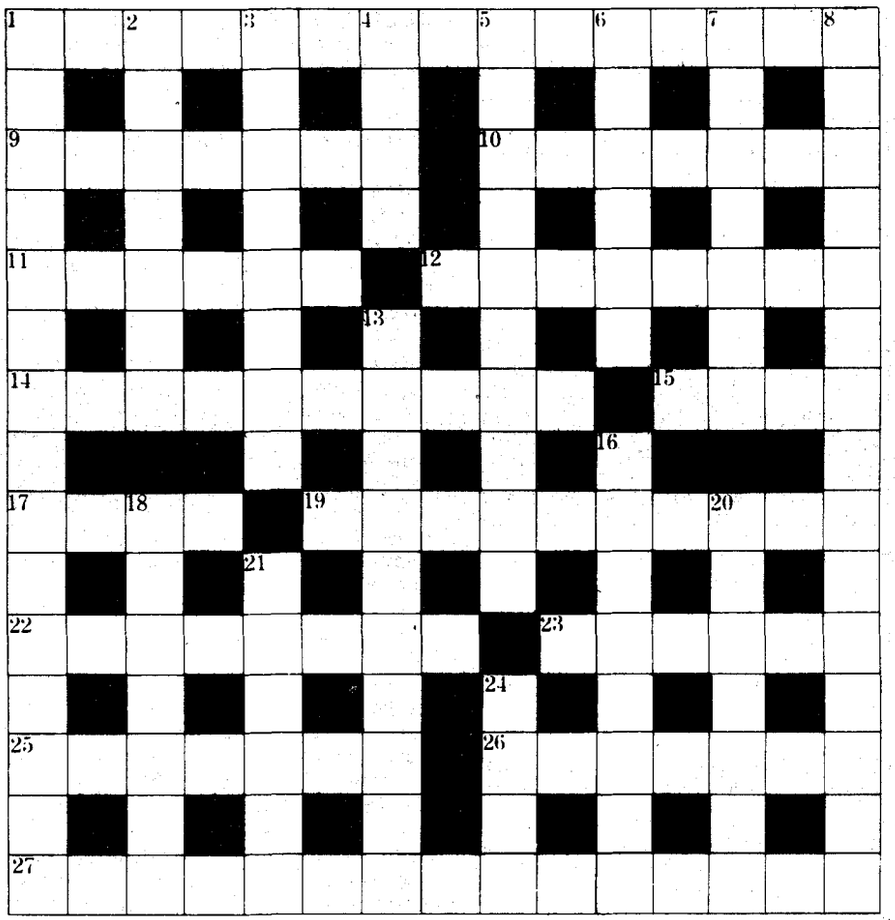
# Crossword Puzzle No. 1962

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Squeaky, as they say, like something Franklin said was dear to someone. (5,2,1,7)
9 In the family of generals, something to chew and something to eat. (7)
10 But such a cat is not necessarily cross. (7)
11 Diamonds on muffs? Quite the reverse. (6)
12 Turner possibly seen by Ezekiel here. (2,3-3)
14 What the detective is sometimes erroneously called rather than net him, possibly. (3,4,3)
15 If you want Irish wit, it might come out in the wash. (4)
17 There's no final point in having no one in time. (4)
19 Prefigure a call to watch out? How sad it could be at last! (10)
22 What happens when the front views are turned 90 degrees? (One might be near the top, if it's big!) (8)
23 The sweet part of the act of feeling. (6)
25 Such a person is not quite real with one. (7)
26 Commonly the surroundings when sorting the mail, etc. (7)
27 If you're looking for complete absence of danger during anesthesia, you might want such to have a lot of people present. (6,2,7)

DOWN

1 Does one do so by summoning the jesters, as one might have to do after a surprising situation? (7,4,4)
2 A warning from Athos? (2,5)
3 A Greek province is not quite a monarchy, but very little changes with it. (8)
4 If you have to wear one, it's not a frame! (4)
5 Misogynist who needs no ham mixed up in the liquid. (5,5)
6 With a coop, it's better to have eggs this way and decorated. (6)
7 See 18
8 They extract what could be lifted by surprise. (7,8)
13 Ad letters, in short, possibly associated with 1983. (4,6)
16 Lustrous, hard and brittle, an element signified by Credit with no flow-back. (8)
18 and 7 Perhaps it implies Junior comes first on Saturday night, but it distinguishes an Englishman. (5,2,3,4)
20 What one might do prior to a change of air, fed up, being not on time. (7)
21 How one agrees with no change after dispatch. (6)
24 Go over the feet carefully, perhaps. (4)

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